आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-1

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR

BHAGAWAN BUDDHA

BY

R. R. DIWAKAR

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

Organising Committee



Buddha in Abhayamudra, Karasai, Central Asia—Frontispiece

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

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R. R. DIWAKAR



1960

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY: BOMBAY

First Edition—January 1960

Price : Rs 4/-, Sh 7, $ 1 80
Rupee Price (outside India) Rs 4 50

PRINTED IN INDIA

By P H Raman at Associated Advertisers & Printers, 505, Arthur Road, Tardeo, Bombay 7, and Published by S Ramakrishnan, Executive Secretary, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 7

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs 2/-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels have a common urge and aspiration

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C Rajagopalachari, the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H V Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata* "What is not in it, is nowhere" After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic, it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine, it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival, but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI,
3rd October, 1951 K. M MUNSHI

INTRODUCTION

PROBABLY no Hindu youth interested in religion and philosophy escapes in his early years the direct or indirect influence of Buddha and Buddhistic thought It might be that sometimes Buddhism is used as a foil in philosophic discussions and written off as something that is atheistic, soulless and negative. But still one has to think of it and deal with it. While doing so one cannot but be impressed by the colossal figure which seems to strut across those early centuries. Mahavir was a very great contemporary of Buddha, no doubt. But he lacks the personal appeal which Buddha's story makes to the common mind Moreover, Buddha is a part and parcel of the Hindu pantheon and every one in the south who performs his daily *Sandhya* or any religious ceremony has to repeat '*Dandakaranye deshe, Godavaryah dakshine teere, Shalivahana shake Bauddhavatare Ramakshetre* .. ' (I am performing this ceremony in Dandakaranya in the region of the river Godavari on the southern side, the era being that of Shalivahan, during the period of the incarnation of Vishnu as Buddha, in the locality where Rama was staying,) as a part of a declaration as regards the time and location of his performance

Even if one ignores these opportunities of acquainting oneself with Buddha, it is impossible to fail to be impressed by Asoka. The acquaintance of Buddha through Asoka is still more impressive and inspiring In my college days I was further attracted towards the ethical philosophy of the *Dhammapada* and I learnt by heart the aphorism. '*Sabba papassa akaranam, kusalassa upasampada; sachitta-pariyodapanam etam Buddhanusasanam*' (This is the teaching of Buddha. Non-doing of all sin, doing of everything that is good and meritorious, and then purification of the mind) It happened that those were the days when the name of the great Buddhist scholar, Professor Kausambi, was very popular. Further, it was my good fortune that Prof. Bapat, my co-student in the B.A. class, had taken Pali as his optional subject, and in subsequent years I had again the opportunity of working (as a colleague in the Rajaram College of Kolhapur), with Professor P.L Vaidya, a profound Sanskrit and Pali scholar.

But undoubtedly the immediate incentive to study and write about Buddha was due to my close touch with Nalanda, and

the Research Institute for Pali and Buddhism located there. This led me to a pilgrimage of Lumbini, Kapilavastu, Kusinara, Sarnath, Rajgriha, Buddha Gaya and so on while I was in Bihar as Governor from 1952 to 1957. Then came the 2,500th centenary of Buddha in 1956 which filled the whole year with various items connected with Buddha and Buddhism. All these kept my mind busy with Buddha and his great personality as well as his simple teachings.

All these may not have been able to make me give shape to my thoughts on Buddha. It was my close acquaintance and exchange of ideas with Bhikku Jagadish Kashyap, the then Director of the Nalanda Institute, which finally made me think of writing on Buddha in this series. I am not only thankful but grateful for all the help that the very earnest and learned Bhikku gave me. While the responsibility of writing the book is entirely mine, I must say that but for his help and encouragement this book in this form would not have seen the light of the day.

The literature on Buddha and Buddhism is vast, varied and in more than dozen important and modern languages of the world. But there is always a place for a popular treatise of this kind in a low-price series like the Bhavan's Book University. The human appeal in the story of Buddha will ever remain a theme which would attract laymen and scholars alike. Here was a human being who in those remote times flung away his princedom, became a recluse in search of Truth, rose above all conventional ideas, evolved and gave a message to the world in words which are suffused with compassion and rich with inner experience. His words went round the world and even today several hundred millions lead their lives in the name of Buddha and in the light of his teachings. It was his originality, his courage of conviction, his realism and above all his rationalism which have given him a very prominent and a permanent place among the religious prophets of the world. It is worthwhile knowing something of this early marvel in religion which has not yet lost its freshness and vigour.

BOMBAY,
15-12-59

R. R. DIWAKAR

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Chapter I

WHY BUDDHA ?

More than 2,500 years have rolled by since Buddha passed into eternal beatitude (*Mahaparinirvana*) It is a very long lapse of time, long enough for anybody to forget everything about any great person or event But this last event in Buddha s life was recently made the occasion for almost worldwide and year-long celebrations India, which gave him birth, as well as Buddhist countries, as also those people who follow or admire Buddha and his teachings, celebrated in 1956 the 2,500th anniversary of his final departure. These celebrations in the case of India and some other countries were on an unprecedented scale In fact, they have no parallel in the long history of Buddha and Buddhism. In some countries, such as Burma, very important work also was done, the available versions of Buddhist scriptures were once again collated by about two thousand learned monks, and nicely reprinted. In other countries, this was an occasion for reiterating the faith of the people in Buddha's teachings and for reviving interest in his unique personality, in Buddhist art and Buddhist literature.

Today more than three hundred millions of Indians look upon Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, the Supreme Lord About 800 million Buddhists consider him to be the saviour, who through numerous transmigrations attained Buddha-hood and showed people The Way. Thinkers and intellectuals all over the world are interested in Buddha as almost the first great rationalist and democrat in matters spiritual and religious It may be said that nearly half the world is attracted in one way or the other by Buddha and his teachings.

Countries and peoples far distant and distinct from each other, both in geography and ideology, rubbed shoulders together and rivalled with each other during the celebrations in paying tributes unreservedly to this great apostle of peace and concord Tibet which worships the Dalai Lama as the living incarnation of Buddha, the Communist Government of China which believes all religions to be an opiate, the secular Government of India which looks upon all religions as equal and useful, came together and exchanged greetings at Nalanda (February 12, 1957) and paid respectful homage to Buddha on the occasion of the presentation by China to India, of the relics of the learned monk and Chinese Buddhist traveller, Yuan Chwang (7th century A D) Hundreds of scholars from all over the world were invited to conferences, seminars and symposia in Burma, Nepal, Ceylon, India and other countries, and they made valuable contributions to the already existing extensive literature on Buddhology.

These are some of the examples of the most recent demonstration of the deep and widespread interest of the world in Buddha If we dip into the past history of Buddhism, it also reveals some very important facts. From the comparatively few square miles of Magadha and Kosala in Northern India, where Buddhism first arose in the sixth century B C. in the midst of the then prevailing Aryan religion or Sanatana Dharma, it spread throughout Asia During Buddha's life (about 560-480 B.C.) it was confined only to the area mentioned above. The great Mauryan Emperor Asoka (269-232 B.C.) made it his own religion and was instrumental in broadcasting it not only in India but far beyond its borders. It was conveyed by his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra to Ceylon. Later still it spread to Central Asia and to the Far East It travelled to China in the first century A D. and then to

Korea and Japan in the 4th and 6th centuries A D, respectively. From China to Annam, it went in the 10th century. This religious system not only covered the countries mentioned above but it profoundly influenced their peoples in their whole outlook on life Though it ceased to be an active and propagative religion in about the 9th century A.D in India, its homeland, the Buddhist tradition never ceased to influence the religious and social outlook of Indians for centuries

Mr M Anesaki writes as follows about Buddhism:

"The spread of Buddhism was notable for the number of strong personalities it engendered Buddhist missions everywhere supported and stimulated a cultural vitality that led to the development not only of saints and ascetics, missionaries and social workers, but also of statesmen and physicians, artists and poets. Of many, we have historical records, others left works of art or literature, while some survive only in deified form Indeed largely to Buddhist inspiration is to be credited the galaxy of great men and some women adorning the histories of the Asiatic peoples in the thirteen centuries from 500 B.C to 800 A D

"The civilising effects of Buddhist influence are not less marked. In addition to its rich heritage of Brahmanic culture, Buddhism absorbed a certain amount of Greek culture, which had early implanted itself in the northwest of India. After a further contact with Persian influences, Buddhism civilised the nomad peoples of Central Asia Under its inspiration scripts and systems of writing were adopted, worship was adorned by art and the social life was largely moulded by its ideals. No more vivid testimonies to the civilising influence of Buddhism are seen than in the relics unearthed from the buried cities of Central Asia But

of more far-reaching importance was its influence upon the Chinese culture, which was destined to mould the civilizations of Korea, Japan, Tibet and Indo-China. Buddhist influence also progressed southward even as far as the Melanesian Islands, where, however, the Brahmanic heritage was more predominant than in the North

"Though not entirely homogeneous, the whole of Asiatic Buddhadom during the first six or seven centuries of the Christian era formed an area of one pervading culture in which Buddhism was definitely the inspiring and integrating power"[*]

In spite of the many centuries that followed with their vicissitudes and the advent of new faiths and new religious influences, some of the countries continue to have a vast number of Buddhists along with priests who keep up traditions very scrupulously. For instance, in Japan in the year 1918 in a population of 50 millions there were about 72,000 temples, 118,000 priests and 5,000 nuns In Ceylon, in a population of 5 millions, there were 2 750,000 Buddhists with 7,700 monks Burma had 75,000 priests and among 10.5 million Buddhists, there were 700,000 monks Even in China where most Buddhists are also Confucianists and Taoists there were no less than one million monks

Referring to the range of Buddhism, Humphreys, in his book on Buddhism, says that 'it is enormous' In time it covers 2,500 years, in space it covers Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Tibet, part of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, and a substantial part of China He further adds "Its range of subjects is no less vast and it is in fact the most comprehensive and profound school of spiritual achievement known to history In its deve-

[*]*The Social Sciences*, p. 35

loped form it includes religion, advanced philosophy, mysticism metaphysics, psychology, magic and ritual; it includes also the triple Yoga of India—intellectual, devotional, and the way of action—and its own unique contribution to human achievement Zen. In every country it raised the indigenous culture, and in China and Japan produced the greatest art of each country. Indeed, the art of T'ang Dynasty of China, often described as the finest in the world, was largely Buddhist art, while throughout the East it has set such a standard of tolerance, gentleness, and love of nature and of the lower forms of life, that in religious history, where these virtues have been predominant, it stands supreme".

All this shows that Buddhism, its rise and rapid spread in the past, as well as its hold on millions in the present rightly deserves our attention It is obvious that Buddhism of today, with all its variety and differing practices, traces its origin and is derived entirely from Buddha, his personality and his teaching The recent celebrations may well be said to be a clear sign of fresh and renewed interest in Buddha and Buddhology.

But what is it that rouses to such a high pitch the interest of varied peoples in Buddha and his teachings ? Buddhism as a religion is, no doubt, widespread and is professed in a variety of forms But in a sense, Buddhism as a way of life is the varied interpretation and practice by different peoples of different climes, of the teachings of Buddha The differences among the various Buddhist sects also leads sometimes to clashes as in the case of sects in other religions But it is not Buddhism so much in its different religious forms, that attracts attention and exacts the homage of the non-Buddhist world, as the colossal spiritual and moral personality of Buddha and his simple teachings It is the humanity of Buddha and the universality of his teaching

that are the living fountain of interest for thinking and feeling humanity. Especially does his message of peace come to us as a soothing balm today in the atomic age, when the minds of all are distracted by the possible destructive use of nuclear weapons and the fatal calamity that may in all likelihood, involve the world in utter ruin Only the love of peace and humanity preached by Buddha can get the better of passions raging in the human heart, and avert the tragedy. It is on account of these facts and the somewhat tragic circumstances of today that Buddha and his message have an added importance Whatever Buddha thought and taught and did is of vital concern today, both for man's inner progress as well as for a happy and harmonious social life among the peoples of the world

CHAPTER II

A MAN BECOMES BUDDHA

BUDDHISM as a religious system is of great significance in the history of the evolution of religions But here I am more concerned with the founder of that religion and his great teachings Here was a man who became a Buddha, an enlightened being, by constant striving, and after he got enlightenment, showed the path to all others out of his abundant compassion for suffering humanity. His life has therefore an intensely human appeal, both individual as well as social.

From the dawn of self-consciousness and since the first knowledge of his own limitations, man seems to have begun to believe in his own perfectability 'Lead me from falsehood to truth, from death to immortality, from darkness to light', was the earnest prayer of the sage of the Upanishad. This prayer embodies the triple aspiration of man which, when achieved, is likely to make him perfect And man's endeavour has been incessant in that direction He who shows man the way to perfection is hailed as a hero, looked upon as a saviour and worshipped as a god

There are, no doubt, difficulties in the way of writing an authentic biography of this great seer of ancient days who lived in India five centuries before Christ There have been various versions of events and facts in his life and today one has to accept those which have been commonly and universally believed and relied upon as the bases of his long life. It is true that after all, it is his teaching that matters more than even the facts of his life. As often happens in the case of prophets, there is fortunately far more unanimity and traditional authenticity as regards Buddha's teachings than about his life. These teachings, however, have their

origin in the life, thought, experience and action of a person who had to go through the usual trials and tribulations of a serious seeker after truth He was born a prince but chose to renounce royal luxuries and sensual pleasures, in order to find the path to inner light and peace. He saw light after a life of hard penance, meditation and an intense search in the depths of his own mind and heart He developed into a saint and a moral teacher of the highest stature. He was raised to the status of Buddhahood, the highest that one could ever reach, according to Buddhism, and after some centuries, he assumed in the minds of people the proportions of an incarnation of God

There is no doubt about the historicity of Buddha. His personality today commands respect and allegiance in spite of the fact that the stories of his life are overlaid by legend, superstitious beliefs and imagination His life was subjected to the Dialogic Process which Max Muller has so well described in his book on Ramakrishna. He says "There is hardly a single fact in history which can escape being modified by this process before it reaches the writer of history. It must be distinguished from the Mythological Process, which forms indeed a part of it, but acts under much more special rules We can watch the Dialogic Process in modern history also, though we have here reporters and newspapers, the biographies and reminiscences of great statesmen which would seem to render the Dialogic infection impossible or harmless. We can only guess what it must have been in times when neither shorthand nor printing existed, when writing and reading were the privilege of a small class, and when very often two or three generations had passed away before the idea of recording certain facts and certain sayings occurred to a chronicler or a historiographer."

However, the later accretions and developments, which

were bound to grow up, need not hold us long nor need they be emphasised here. It is far more helpful for a proper study of Buddha's teachings not to lay too much stress on the correctness or otherwise of the details of his life, as handed down by tradition As already pointed out, it is his teaching that is his real legacy to us It is the discipline that he evolved and ordained for arriving at truth which is directly helpful for every earnest seeker after truth. The most important and well-established facts of his life add authenticity and authority to the teaching and prove that the teaching was not merely preached but practised by a man in flesh and blood.

Across the 2,500 years that have gone by, the figure of Buddha still hearkens to us; and there are many cogent reasons for it. He was a historical person and walked this earth in flesh and blood His is predominantly a human story when stripped of all the imaginative fabric that has been woven round him later by the mass-mind and by his admirers and devotees Though his own enlightenment was the product of an intuitionistic vision, he approached the problems of life as a rationalist without depending upon any word of authority, revealed or otherwise In fact, his approach and outlook was highly scientific. The discipline that he prescribed was mainly psychological and was the result of his own experience and experiments He analysed the thought of his own days and studied his own inner experiences, and he relied only on what stood the test of his reason and his deep sense of realism He emphasized ethical conduct as the essence and test of religion, and distinguished it from rituals and ceremonies, which are but formalities and, at best, are aids to the common and immature mind

It is a truism that only one in a million tries to find a path to Truth, few among those that seek, find a path,

and among the finders, fewer still are those who are willing and able to show it to others. There is no doubt that Buddha was among the last few, who could find a fresh path and who did hold the lamp to humanity. Buddha took religion to the doors of the people and taught them in their own language. He rose superior to race and sex, caste and creed, to the hierarchy and the sacerdotal order of his days and democratized religion by declaring all human beings as equals. In his eyes, each individual was capable of rising to the highest stage, and that too by his own effort. He recognised no outside authority save that of his own inner light. 'Be a light unto yourself,' was his exhortation to his disciples He may be said also to be the first founder of a disciplined and organised monastic order that proved successful and powerful beyond expectation. Above all, he stood for peace and harmony, both inner and outer, and showed the way of compassion and love to humanity.

It is these important aspects of his teachings that draw our attention to Buddha and his gospel. It is this universality of interest that more than anything else, attracts the modern mind towards him.

The usual sources for a biography of Buddha are bits of authentic history that have trickled down the ages, traditional stories, myths and legends, religious and other literature—contemporary or otherwise, and cross references in biography and history. It is on the basis of this type of material that many a biographer of Buddha has attempted to write his life. I am certainly not as ambitious as other biographers, but I have tried to reconstruct Buddha's life in order that we may understand his teachings better, as also know the correlation between his teachings, his actions and his experiences

In spite of the deification of Buddha, his simple life and his teachings in the form of injunctions, dialogues.

parables and Jatakas remain very human and helpful The incidents of his life and the events that ultimately led to his becoming a world teacher are dramatic and extremely interesting It is true that on account of the numerous versions of his life, one has to be extremely cautious. But obviously, those facts, which have been accepted by most of the writers, have to be the foundations of his biography.

Before taking up the task of narrating his life-story, I would like to present a rough picture of the environment of his day and the flow of thought and events in the midst of which he was born and had his being. Without such a picture before us, no proper appreciation and assessment is possible, of the part Buddha played in the great and still unfolding continuous drama of vigorous thought, varied life and vital culture on the vast Indian stage which covers at least three or four millenniums He strikes us as a colossal figure standing across the mighty stream of human life which flows and flows on in this ancient land with the freshness of a mountain rivulet and full of the creativity of a vital people.

CHAPTER III

PRE-BUDDHIST ERA

THE scene of Buddha's life lay on both sides of the Ganga almost midway in her course when she flows through Uttar Pradesh and Bihar Roughly, it comprised the regions then known as Kosala, Malla, Kashi, Mithila, Anga and Magadha Today we can say that the region approximately covers part of the Nepal terai to the north of the districts of Gorakhpur and Varanasi of Uttar Pradesh, and the districts of Champaran, Saran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Bhagalpur, Patna and Gaya of Bihar State The late Dr. Ambedkar once told me that Buddha visited Delhi (Hastinapur or Indraprasth) during his itinerary, but I could not get any documentary confirmation about it

Most of the important sites, places, rivers, and mountains connected with the life of Buddha mentioned in the Pali texts and the Jatakas and other literature are generally to be found in the areas mentioned above But the mere fact that Buddha does not seem to have travelled beyond these places does not at all mean that he was a stranger to what was going on outside this region or that this region was in any way isolated On the other hand, it is well-known that trade routes radiated on all sides from Magadha These were the regular channels of exchange both of material goods as well as cultural ideas

Buddhist texts mention Shodasha Mahajanapadas, that is, sixteen kingdoms, in Northern India The names, however, are not so much of countries as of the peoples. It may be generally said that the list was tribal or dynastic and not geographical These sixteen Janapadas are · Anga, Magadha, Kashi, Kosala, Vijji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Panchala, Matsya, Surasena, Ashmaka, Avanti, Gandhara

and Kambhoja Of these the major kingdoms were Magadha, Kosala, Avanti and Vatsa The above sixteen names occur in some of the Puranas also with a few substitutes and minor variations

The Vijjis included eight confederate republics The Lichhavis, the Videhas and the Vijjis themselves were the most important of them The capital of the Videhas was at Mithila. Janaka, the Kshatriya scholar and learned philosopher famous in the Upanishads, once ruled there. Janakpur, which is said to have been a big city, is today a small town in Nepal terai Vaishali, the modern village Basarh, is in Muzaffarpur district. It was the capital of the Lichhavis and also the headquarters of the Vijjian confederacy

Anga, as described in the *Mahabharata*, seems to have comprised the districts of Bhagalpur and Monghyr with its capital Champa, which was a great centre of trade

The *Mahabharata* mentions that the Mallas were conquered by Bhimsena in his expedition *Niragyavali Sutra* says that the kingdom of the Mallas had nine territories, each under a confederate clan Possibly it extended to parts of Nepal terai Kushinara and Pawa were the headquarters They are mentioned in the course of the *mahaparinirvana* of Buddha who breathed his last in the territory of the Mallas Their dominions were annexed to the Magadhan empire not long after Buddha's death

The peoples who inhabited the areas concerned, whatever their origin, had already been Aryanised and there is no word of disparagement or ridicule used in Buddhist texts about the indigenous people Though northern Bihar seems to have come under the influence of Aryan culture earlier than the southern part, there is no doubt that centuries before Buddha, Kosala as well as Magadha had been Aryanized There is a tradition in the Puranas

which mentions the sage Deerghatamas of Angirasa Gotra as having introduced Vedic culture in Anga and Magadha. This does not mean that there were no non-Aryan peoples at all living in the region at that time. The Nagas, for instance, were a very powerful tribe and they are mentioned with respect in some texts. Muchalinda Naga is said to have protected Buddha on one critical occasion.

It seems that the Aryans, after having fully occupied the Kuru-Panchala area for a long period, moved eastward along the banks of the river Ganga in their ambition to Aryanize the world (*Krunvanto Vishwam Aryam*). It may be noted, however, that there does not seem to have been at any time a total destruction or a wholesale forced conversion of the local people The process was rather one of slow persuasion and assimilation after the first clashes and mutual measuring of strength In this process, the Aryans, while keeping their basic faith, seem to have been themselves converted to many of the ideas, customs and traditions of the non-Aryan peoples Chotanagpur was at that time a very big and impenetrable forest and was inhabited very sparsely by a few wild tribes.

Politically, there were monarchical as well as republican systems of government, working even side by side in neighbouring regions For instance, while the Magadhans were under a monarchy, the Vijjis were a republic. The Shakya clan in which Buddha himself was born was a republic It may be noted, however, that though some of the republics during the days of Buddha were very powerful, efficient and systematic in their administration, they were later overpowered by monarchs like Ajatashatru. The Vijji confederacy was a typically good and powerful republic, so much so, that Buddha himself copied a part of their constitution and procedure for being adopted in his monastic organisation

It would be a grievous mistake to think that Buddha had a clean slate to write on, or that everything before him was crude and primitive and that he was the first law-giver. Both these are misconceptions born of ignorance. Though born as a Kshatriya prince, Buddha came in the wake of the Rishis and the Munis, the seers and reformers of Indian religious and philosophic thought Sanatana Dharma, the Hinduism of those days, was the most predominant and well-established religion There was great freedom of thought and there were a number of schools of thought within and without the Vedic fold Buddha was himself educated by learned Brahmans of Kapilavastu He was and is often called Shakyamuni and later he came to be regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu

Possibly more than about a thousand years before him, the composition of Vedic hymns had already begun and they had been handed down from generation to generation without the change of a syllable or an accent In their wake came the Upanishads or end parts of the Vedas which gave the Upanishads the name 'Vedanta' There were in the field a number of thought-systems already, Vedic, semi-Vedic. non-Vedic as well as independent In fact, the Upanishadic period promoted free and rational thought to the utmost The Sankhya and Yoga systems, for instance, were prevalent and also dominant at that time to a great extent

Broadly speaking, there were two distinct schools of thought which could be described as Brahmanical and Shramanic (belonging to Shramanas) The Brahmanical schools of thought generally derived from the Vedic and the Upanishadic traditions The followers of the Shramanic school did not pledge any loyalty to the Vedic or the Upanishadic traditions While those two schools of thought can also be characterised as Vedic and non-Veidc (not necessarily anti-Vedic), we should never make the mistake of

basing them on racial distinction and calling them Aryan and non-Aryan There was nothing racial about them By the time of Buddha or even far earlier, that difference had disappeared. In fact, though Buddha was an Aryan Kshatriya, he had possibly some preference for the tradition of the Shramanas But he never called himself a non-Aryan On the other hand, he calls his own way, the *Arya Ashtangika Marga*, the eightfold Aryan path. He did not look upon either the Brahmans or the Shramanas as superior or inferior He usually mentions both of them with equal respect, provided they were sincere and loyal to their own beliefs. One of the characteristics of the Brahmanical schools was hierarchy and an aristocratic tradition and attitude. But Shramana schools of thought were based on the equality of all and they had scant respect for the *varna* or the caste system They were equally open to all

It is well-known that Buddha himself came of a high Kshatriya family of the Solar race and had respect for the Kshatriyas, but at the same time he did not look upon them as superior simply on account of birth When Buddha went forth in search of truth, he did not make any distinction between the Brahmanical and Shramanic schools He tried to gather truth from wherever he could find it. It is mentioned that something like sixty-two schools of thought existed at the time of Buddha As the Vedic schools of thought are well-known, we will summarise their main principles and then refer to the non-Vedic systems of thought which were important at the time of Buddha The latter seem to have evolved in pre-Buddhistic times or somewhat prior to Buddha

It is obvious that for our purposes, the spiritual life, the religious beliefs and practices, the systems of philosophical thought of the days of Buddha and somewhat previous to him, the social structure of the times are more important

than geography or political conditions. There is no doubt that the early Vedic age with its penetrative intuition, and then the later period of the predominance of sacrifices and complete reliance on them for salvation, had long passed. The age of philosophic speculation and of earnest spiritual seeking as reflected in the Upanishads was already there A clear distinction between the ephemeral sense pleasures (*preya*), and the inner ineffable spiritual joy (*shreya*) had already been made Insufficiency of sacrifices as the means of spiritual salvation (*adridhah Yajnaroopah*) was established. The triple path of sense-self-control, compassion and gifts (*dama*, *daya* and *dana*) as a real means to a higher life had gripped the minds of men and was in the atmosphere Meditation according to the Yoga technique seems to have been even older than the Upanishads. The intellectual ferment and free discussions which are reflected in the Upanishads were a clear indication of the advent of reason in the realms of religion and all that it stood for. It may be that many of the Upanishads were written earlier and somewhere in the Kuru-Panchala or Kosala country But there could be no doubt that it was in Bihar that the conversations and debates at the court of Janaka or Videha took place. It was at Vaishali, Rajagriha and other places in Bihar that Buddha sought intellectual and philosophic satisfaction prior to his spiritual enlightenment

The Vedic or Brahmanical way of thinking postulated, belief in the oneness of the spirit, realisation of that oneness, faith in the immortality of the soul, attainment of that immortality and supreme bliss through knowledge and detachment, belief in the law of Karma, in reincarnation, in spiritual salvation as distinct from mere attainment of heaven, faith in the importance of sense and self-control, in truth, in *ahimsa*, in *tapas*, in compassion, in *brahmacharya* in *Aparigraha* and *Yoga* as disciplines were already there

There were also other systems or disciplines which did not derive from or rely on the Vedas for authority. They were transmitted from father to son or teacher to disciple from generation to generation They were preserved and continued by groups of wandering ascetics who came under the general category of the Shramanas The emphasis in the case of Shramanas was on asceticism and on renunciation of family life, as means of salvation These schools of thought were either protestant in character or they rose and flourished as different from and independent of Vedic schools. Probably even among the followers of the Vedas, there was a section which condemned sacrifices of the old type and advocated renunciation of family life at an advanced age. The conversation between Yagnawalkya and his wife Maitreyi in the *Brihadaranyakopanishad* illustrates the point It is not true therefore to say that all the followers of the Vedas at the time of Buddha were immersed in sacrifices and that they were utter strangers to the gospel of Sanyas On the other hand, there was always a strong school of thought which stood for renunciation early in life. Shukadeva may be said to be a shining example of that school

It is significant that most of the protestant movements in ancient India, such as Jainism, Buddhism and others arose in Bihar The Vratyas are referred to in the Atharva Veda as 'easterners' Theirs also was a way of protest They wandered from place to place and led a celibate life without any Vedic ceremonies They advocated a life of retirement devoted to spiritual contemplation It is possible that the Vratya mode of life paved the way for the later Shramana, Sanyasa, Jaina and Buddha schools of renunciation of family life It may also be noted that the *Bhagavata Purana* speaks of the people of Mithila as adepts in the knowledge of the spirit and mentions that

they were 'detached' even though living householders' lives Non-attachment or detachment (*anasakti*) is the keynote and the technique of this kind of synthesis Here is a pointer to the active life of a *Karma Yogi* who while detached within, is busy doing his duties without abandoning his normal ways of life. Traditionally, Janaka of Mithila represents the philosopher king, who while fully alive to every kingly duty, is inwardly quite detached.

Among the founders of the non-Vedic schools of thought, we come across Parsva, a historical person who is said to have flourished about 250 years prior to Mahavir and Buddha. He was the son of Asvasena of Varanasi and renounced his kingdom for pursuing his spiritual ideal. It was he who founded the Nirgrantha (without a knot) order He emphasized gentleness straightforwardness, purity, truth, self-control, austerity, renunciation and non-possession. The Nirgranthas had to observe four vows, namely, truth, non-killing, non-stealing, and non-possession. Therefore, it was called the *Chatur-Yama* (four-fold) *Dharma* Mahavir who was the last of the Teerthankaras, i.e. the prophets of the Jainas, added the fifth vow, namely, that of *brahmacharya*

There were certain ideas and views which were common to both the Vedic and non-Vedic schools, especially among those who emphasised renunciation as the best way for spiritual realization They held that worldly life was dominated by sorrow and misery, and that the ultimate goal of man should be to get rid of them and be free They also held that the world was constantly undergoing change and that not even an atom in it was permanent and lasting. The attempt was to discover something everlasting, beyond and above the perceptible world. Once this constant element was discovered, the thinkers felt that it was possible to pursue it and attain peace The general belief was

that the way to that spiritual state was not through the life of the senses or of the common man or of the householder, but through complete renunciation

The Shramana class of thinkers had several groups. Some wore robes, white or coloured, others went naked: some carried staves; some shaved their heads, some grew beards and long or matted hair and so on.

While there were different systems of thought and discipline, there were certain ideas, customs and superstitions which were common to the masses, to whichever creed or belief or system of thought they formally subscribed. Tree-worship, for instance, was very common even in the pre-Vedic religion of Bihar. It was believed that trees were haunted by divinities or by departed spirits Not only Buddhists but also Sanatani Hindus of all schools venerate the Peepul (fig) tree even today. Sometimes offerings are made to it Buddha himself chose for meditation the Peepul tree and its shade as being very propitious He felt also grateful to the Bodhi tree under which he attained enlightenment. The Chaitya was looked upon as a place of worship by all even from far earlier times than Buddha. The Chaityas were associated with funeral remains They were usually away from towns or villages, in solitary places and at the crossings of rivers and streams People prayed to the Chaityas for the fulfilment of their desires The Chaityas had also some tree or trees associated with them. Even Buddha did not want the Lichhavis to give up Chaitya worship[4] Another object of respect was the Yakshas. They were popular spirits, either benevolent or malevolent Nagas (serpents) and sacred stones also were objects of worship of the general populace Stupas were definitely in vogue and they were usually the repositories of the relics of ancestors They were associated also with the worship of the departed

As regards the six most important teachers who are said to have lived in the 7th century B C, Dr Altekar gives a succinct account in *Bihar Through The Ages*.—

"Of the six thinkers, Nigantha Nataputta is no other than Mahavir, the founder, or according to Jain tradition, the last prophet of the present world cycle He preached the philosophy of *anekantavada* and ethical doctrines similar to those of Parsva, who had lived some 250 years before him

The next important thinker of the age was Makkhali Gosala He belonged to the sect of the Achelakar and always carried a staff of bamboo in his hands His sect is now extinct The doctrine advocated by him is styled as *Samsara Vishuddhi*, or the doctrine of attaining purity or freedom from mundane existence by passing through all existences, the number of which is fixed He did not believe that there was any special cause for either the misery of human beings or for their deliverance He did not believe in human effort, and held that all creatures were helpless against destiny He maintained that every creature, whether wise or foolish. was destined to pass through *samsara* (the cycle of worldly life) and that his or her misery would cease with the completion of this cycle. No human effort could reduce or prolong this period.

The next thinker of this age was Purana Kassapa, who was a champion of *Akriyavada* or the doctrine of non-action He maintained that a man did not incur sin through actions which were popularly known as bad, that is to say, killing, or committing theft, adultery and so on Similarly man did not earn any merit through his good acts This doctrine would appear to be similar to that of Charvakas (materialists).

Ajita Keshakambalin was another senior contempo-

rary of Buddha He did not believe in the utility of gifts, in sacrifice, in the existence of a heavenly world or in persons possessing higher or supernatural powers. He held that the body consisted of four elements, into which it dissolved after death He also held that it was useless to talk of the next world His doctrine is traditionally referred to as *Ucchedavada*.

Kakudha Kaccayana of the Buddhist Sutta is probably Kakuda Katyayana mentioned in the *Prashnopanishad* His doctrine may be styled as *Shasvatavada*. According to him, there are seven elements which are immutable and which do not in any way contribute to pleasure or pain. The body is ultimately dissolved into these seven elements, which are eternal.

The last among these teachers is Sanjaya Belatthiputta His doctrine is known as *Vikshepavada*, or that which diverts the mind from the right track. He declines to give categorical answers to any question or problem facing the human mind. There are ten unexplained and unanswered problems that have always exercised the minds of men. They have been frequently referred to in Buddhist literature. It may be mentioned that these questions were also put to Buddha, and that he too declined to discuss them, though his attitude towards them was different. He maintained that it was a waste of time to discuss them, since such idle questions of a metaphysical nature were in no way conducive to human progress.

When such was the background, Buddha came on the scene with his middle path. He attempted to solve the problem of life by his doctrine of *Majjhima Patipada* (the middle path) He preached this doctrine for some forty-five years After his death, his followers codified

his teachings and what was once a simple doctrine and faith became a systematic creed."

The above account of the Vedic and Non-Vedic schools of thought gives us a fair idea of the religious, philosophical and spiritual atmosphere which prevailed prior to the advent of Buddha It was obvious therefore that the system of thought and discipline which he founded was the result of the exercise of his creative power on the existing thought and ways of life Though his was a definite protest against certain evils that had accumulated in Sanatana Dharma, he never made a deliberate attempt either to break away from it or to set-up any rival organisation But at the same time, he clinched the issue and saw to it that people concentrated on the main problem and were not diverted by considerations, thoughts and discussions which were not immediately relevant While the elaborate systems of spiritual culture built up in India through ages can be compared to a vast banyan tree, Buddha may be said to be one of the pioneers who struck firm roots on the basis not of any book or authority but on his own inner light, his personal experience, reason and practical ethics. His greatness lies in finding a way out of the intricate and complicated systems that were prevalent, a way which could be easily understood and followed even by the common people

CHAPTER IV

LINEAGE AND BIRTH

THE two important places associated with the birth and early life of Buddha are Lumbini and Kapilavastu. Both of them are today in the Nepal territory. There is no doubt that Lumbini was the birthplace of Buddha. It was identified as early as 3rd century B C. by Asoka, and the fifteen feet pillar of Chunar stone with characteristic Mauryan polish erected by him stands there as witness. It was erected in 244 B C. and the inscription on it runs thus 'Here the Exalted One was born'. A temple of Maya Devi, Buddha's mother, is also at Lumbini. This must have been built later, as the building of temples was not yet in vogue in the time of Asoka In the temple, Maya Devi is seen in a standing but relaxed posture, with the right leg crossing the left below the knee, and holding for support a bent branch of a Sal tree in her left hand There are a number of stupas round about the temple which have been excavated some decades ago. Some mounds which stand at a little distance from the Asokan pillar show that they too might be sites of some more stupas All of them may not belong to the Asokan period but they certainly show that Lumbini continued to be a holy place of pilgrimage for centuries Keen interest in the place has now been vigorously revived since the 2500th centenary celebrations of Buddha's *Parinirvana* As a result, the site and the approach to it have been improved beyond recognition from what they were some years ago

Lumbini, which is situated in the Himalayan Terai regions, is now in the kingdom of Nepal It can be approached from India from the south and from the north via the Nepal highlands It lies about twenty miles north

of Nautanwa railway terminus in the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh The road runs through the terai in the midst of rice fields, swamps and streams which are torrential in the monsoon As one proceeds from Nautanwa, the Dhavalgiri range of the Himalayas runs almost parallel to the right The same road takes us to Kapilavastu which is about twenty-five miles from Lumbini

Kapilavastu does not seem to have been a very big city. Though Lumbini was Buddha's birthplace, it was the town of Kapilavastu and its environs which was the scene of his early life, education, marriage and renunciation Lumbini was more or less a pleasure garden, might be a king's garden, full of the majestic Sal and other trees. Kapilavastu, however, was a populous town and the capital of the Sakya clan, amongst whom Buddha was born. The site which is now shown as that of Kapilavastu is overgrown with forest and there is no trace of any township there today It obviously awaits thorough excavation and is likely to reveal much that is valuable, provided it is the correct site of Kapilavastu

The Sakyas were a small Kshatriya clan of the Solar race ruling over a territory which partly consisted of the Himalayan slopes and mainly of the Himalayan terai It was about 900 square miles in extent and lay north of the Kosala kingdom of ancient India It was bounded by the Himalayas on the north, by the river Rohini on the east and by the river Rapti on the south and west The terai area seems to have been rich then, as now, on account of rice fields irrigated by a number of Himalayan streams running south. Shuddhodana, the name of the father of Buddha, meant wealth in the form of 'pure rice' (shuddha-odana). The Sakyas have been traditionally mentioned as a republican clan, though the chieftainship was hereditary and the ruling prince was called Raja. It is only once that

Shuddhodana is mentioned as a Maharaja in Pali literature. The law of primogeniture held good and the eldest son of the Raja used to inherit the kingship of the clan. The Sakya kingdom was obviously not a full-fledged republic like those of the Vijjians or the Lichhavis, amongst whom chiefs were elected from a group of aristocratic families. Whether it was a full republic or not, the Sakyas were a proud, independent and self-respecting Kshatriya clan, managing their own affairs without let or hindrance from others.

While Buddha's father belonged to the Sakya clan, his mother Maya Devi came from the Kauliya clan which hailed from Devadaha, a place which might have been as distant from Lumbini on the opposite side as Lumbini is from Kapilavastu. Today, Devadaha is not traceable. Not much is known of the family of Maya Devi, though it is stated that Pajapati or Mahapajapati was her sister and that she too was married to Shuddhodana

Because Buddha came of the Sakya clan he was often called 'Sakyamuni' (sage) and also 'Sakyasimha', a lion among the Sakyas. The family name of the clan was Gautama. Gautama is known in the Puranas as a great *Rishi* and as the author of the *Nyaya Sutras* or Aphorisms of Logic. Buddha is sometimes called by the name of Gautama, that is, one who traced his lineage to Gautama Rishi

Buddha's mother too belonged to a Kshatriya family and her father was a petty chieftain. It is mentioned that when Maya Devi was *enciente*, she expressed a desire to go to her father's house. On her way to Devadaha, she rested at the Lumbini gardens, and it was there that Buddha was born. Buddha's christian name was Siddhartha, which means one who has attained his object or fulfilled his purpose. This name was given to him, it is said, by his godfather, Asita, a rishi mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* along

with the famous Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata* (*Asito Devalo Vyasah*). Asita also predicted that the child would be pre-eminently religious and probably found a religion

It was probably in the year 563 B C. that Buddha was born on the full-moon day of the month of Vaishakh when the spring is usually at its peak. He was born to Maya Devi, the wife of King Shuddhodana of the Sakyas. The birth took place in the royal pleasure-garden of Lumbini which lay about midway between Kapilavastu and Devadaha, her paternal home. As the prince was the first-born, there was very great rejoicing all over the kingdom After seven days, Maya Devi passed away and Mahapajapati, her sister, took charge of the child He was taken home to Kapilavastu and every care began to be bestowed on him

It was customary to call an astrologer to draw up the horoscope of new-born children. Two of the astrologers who were called found that the position of the planets at the time of birth was such that the child was bound to be a *chakravartin*, that is, 'one who would turn the wheel of law' This meant that he would either be the king of kings or renounce the world and be the founder of a religion Asita, one of the two astrologers however, asserted that there was no question of any alternative and that he would definitely establish a new religion

The prediction did not bring much of solace to the royal parents. After a long and anxious wait, he was looking forward to a son who would be an heir to his throne However, he was soon absorbed in bringing up the child according to traditions and in a manner befitting royalty.

The above is the bare and simple outline of the beginning of the life of Siddhartha who developed later into the Arhant, Buddha Supreme, the perfectly Enlightened Being.

A reference here to this event as it appears in the Pali

Canon (*Nalaka Sutta* in *Sutta-Nipata*) is of special interest.

On the occasion of Siddhartha's birth, the Seer Asita is described as having been greatly surprised to see the whole of creation indulging in universal jubilation. He questioned the gods (*devas*) about the cause of such uninhibited joy.

They said The Bodhisatta (Buddha in the making) had been born for the deliverance of mankind He was born in Lumbini in the Sakya country. He was a 'bull' among men and was the highest of all beings. He would turn the wheel of Dhamma, that is, preach Dhamma roaring like a veritable lion. When Asita himself went to see the child, it was brought and shown to him It was 'shining in glory and lovely in appearance' He explained: This prince would reach the summit of enlightenment. His insight is pure beyond conception. Out of compassion he would turn the wheel of Dhamma and spread the gospel of the holy life for the welfare of mankind

Similar references to Buddha's birth are found in *Digha Nikaya* XIV. The mother of a Bodhisattwa is always described as being spotless and endowed with the five virtues —*Panchasheela* Bodhisatta is always born stainless, undefiled by blood or mucus At his birth, an infinite and splendid radiance is made manifest in the world The child is endowed with the thirty-two marks of a Great Soul —*Mahapurusha* If he becomes an emperor, he does so by righteousness and not by the scourge of the sword, but if he goes into 'the homeless state' (renunciation), he becomes a Buddha 'rolling back the veil of ignorance from the world' When people see him, they recognise him as a Seer (Vipassin) and he becomes the guide of humanity.

These observations clearly indicate the mighty stature which Buddha had already attained in the minds of the monks or Bhikkus who were mainly responsible for the collation and preservation of the Pali canons. All this

happened within about three hundred years of his birth.

In *Buddhavamsa* XXVI, we find an important passage in this connection. Gautama when visiting his home in Kapilavastu after becoming Buddha is purported to have narrated his own story in brief It begins, 'I am the Buddha of today, Gotama of the Sakyan clan, shining in my striving, I won the highest enlightenment' Then follow some other recitals 'My city is called Kapilavastu, my father Suddhodana, my mother the lady Maya For nine and twenty years I dwelt at home in three peerless palaces called Rama, Surama, and Subhata I was surrounded by numerous women Bhaddakaccha was one of the important women I had a son, Rahula by name'

CHAPTER V

EARLY LIFE, EDUCATION AND MARRIAGE

VERY few facts about Buddha's early life are known and even tradition is not very eloquent about this period. The astrologers had predicted that Siddhartha would renounce worldly life after seeing an old man, a sick man, a dead man, and finally an ascetic, and the king took special care to see that the child should get no chance of seeing any such persons. The palace and its environs are hardly a place where a prince is likely to come in contact with such sights. But the royal parent took great precautions so that nobody even spoke to the prince about the sorrows and sufferings common to all humanity.

Mother Maya Devi had died when Siddhartha was only seven days old. Mahapajapati, Maya Devi's sister, who also had been married to Shuddhodana, had taken charge of the child. The father's affection had focussed itself all the more on the motherless child. His education was specially attended to and he was taught all that a Kshatriya prince ought to learn. Along with reading and writing, he was given lessons in music, riding and archery. His associates were well-chosen; he was always surrounded by companions who would not give him any chance of knowing anything about the suffering and misery in the world outside.

There are only two incidents mentioned about his early student life. One is about a wounded swan which he came across in the forest garden attached to the palace. The swan had been hit by an arrow by a chance hunter who was wandering about for a game on the outskirts of the garden. This may be said to be almost his first conscious experience of sympathy with an innocent animal that was suffering from

the agony of a wound This experience sank deep in his memory It is probable that this was the first time that he became aware of the rich and deep emotion of feeling for others in distress which burst like a suppressed fountain in his heart. His later doctrine of compassion (*karuna*) may have been the flowering of the seed that struck its firm root in his tender heart on this occasion

The second incident happened when he experienced a trance, the first of its kind, while sitting under the cool shade of a rose-apple tree in the royal gardens at Lumbini It is stated that on a particular day, the courtiers who were in charge of the prince missed him in the garden for a long time They went about in search of him. They found him sitting cross-legged under an Amalaki or rose-apple tree. There is a long-established tradition among the Yogis which believes that the shade of the Amalaki tree and that of some four others, is specially suited for meditation Even if 'sitting cross-legged' and other details may be supposed to be later additions, the fact of an early experience of a trance which gave him the first glimpse of 'uncaused and ineffable joy' need not be doubted The impression left on his mind was so deep that he recalled it when he met Alar Kalam in later life and requested him to show the way to that kind of joy which he had enjoyed in childhood under an Amalaki tree. Moreover, this kind of sudden experience is not a novelty in the early lives of saints and mystics who later rose to great heights of spiritual bliss. This kind of early experience only indicates the natural physical and psychological capacity of the person concerned for spiritual experiences and attainments, and awakens in him a persistent longing for the repetition of the same experience, with the ultimate aim of making it a permanent possession.

These two incidents are very important from the point of

view of the early beginnings and the psychological evolution of Siddhartha in the direction of his later enlightenment. In spite of the precautions taken by his royal father and the happy circumstances with which Siddhartha was surrounded, his mind was already moving in the direction of a career which was quite different from that of a ruling prince

It is interesting to know that side by side with the princely education that Siddhartha was being given and the happy company that he was provided with, his father had taken care to build palaces and gardens suited for the luxurious life of a prince who was to be kept completely away from anything that may give him an idea of human suffering In *Anguttara Nikaya*, Buddha is purported to have described as follows his life at the time

> "I was delicate, O monks, extremely delicate excessively delicate In my father's dwelling lotus pools had been made in one blue lotuses, in another red, and in another white ones bloomed, all for my sake I used no sandalwood that was not of Banaras, my dress was of Banaras cloth, my tunic, my under-robe, and cloak Night and day a white parasol was held over me so that I should not be touched by cold or heat, by dust or weeds or dew I had three palaces, one for the cold season, one for the hot and one for the season of rains. Through the four rainy months, I stayed in the palace for the rainy season, entertained by female minstrels, I did not come down from the palace, and while in the dwellings of others, food from the husks of rice is given to the slaves and workmen together with sour gruel, in my father's dwelling rice and meat was given instead to the slaves and workmen"

After bringing up his son in a sheltered manner up to the age of sixteen or so, Shuddhodana thought of the next

step of getting him married, so that his mind may be absorbed in love for his wife. It is said that when the Sakyan king began to think in terms of a beautiful princess as a bride for his son, the Kshatriya chiefs who intended to give their daughters in marriage to Siddhartha began to have doubts about his education and qualifications; so cloistered had been the life of the prince on account of the apprehensions of the father When the king came to know of these doubts, he convinced all of them about the great skill the prince had acquired in the art of archery and other martial sports No further difficulties arose about his marriage and he found in Yashodhara or Yashowati, who belonged to his own clan, a very loving and beautiful wife befitting his status and his accomplishments. His married life proved to be very happy and as was the fashion in those days, he was always surrounded by a host of lovely damsels who rendered him all kinds of personal service, and entertained him day and night with dance and music and games suited for every occasion and season

King Shuddhodana was highly pleased to see his son spending a life of amour and luxury without the remotest idea of the miseries of the outside world He almost felt that he had falsified the astrologers and cheated fate. Prince Siddhartha then in his full and youthful bloom was immersed in the daily round of sports and joys and felt himself happiest in the embrace of Yashodhara For him, the world and life were but an eternal succession of pleasures in endless variety He seemed to be quite oblivious of the destiny that was awaiting him He hardly felt that there was really any other or alternative kind of life or experience in this world When he was being borne along on this high tide of sense pleasures, Yashodhara conceived and gave birth to a child which proved to be another bond, further tying Siddhartha to the life of joy and pleasure So lovely

was the child Rahul, that its mother's real name was almost forgotten and Yashodhara came to be known as Rahul-mata, the mother of Rahul

Edward J. Thompson, the author of *Early Buddhist Scriptures*, writes that, 'Nothing is told in the scriptures about the life of Buddha between his birth and the time when he renounced and left the house', in search of truth This is generally true. There are however, some very brief references in *Dighanikaya* (XIV), a few of which are given below and are interesting.–

Gautama's father, King Shuddhodana, honoured the soothsayers with new robes and gratified every desire of them, after they had pronounced the important prediction about the new-born child

The king then engaged nurses for the babe Some suckled him, some washed him, some nursed him some carried him about on their hips A white canopy was held over him day and night, for the king had commanded 'Let not cold or heat or straws or dust or dew annoy him' The boy Gautama became the darling and the beloved of the people, even as a blue or red or white lotus is dear to and beloved of all, so that he was literally carried 'from hip to hip'

Gautama's voice as a child is described as lovely, modulated, sweet and charming, just like the voice of the Karavika bird in the Himalayas His eyes were clear and could see as far as a league by day They looked like the eyes of a clairvoyant He always looked forward with unblinking eyes as the gods do People who saw him exclaimed that he was a seer It is mentioned that when Gautama's father sat in court for deciding cases, he would take the boy on his laps He would so 'lay down the law as to the cases arising, till verily the boy, there seated on his father's lap, and continually considering, would also

determine the points of the case according to justice'. People then would say, 'it is the babe who is judging cases aright' This caused the people to attach the title of 'Seer' to the babe more and more

Child Gautama was said to have been born with thirty-two marks of a great man, a *Mahapurusha* These marks are described in *Dighanikaya* and they give us an idea as to what people looked upon as the marks of great men The description is as follows

This babe has projecting heels,
He is long in the fingers and long in the toes,
Soft and tender in hands and feet,
With hands and feet like a net
His ankles are like rounded shells ;
His legs are like an antelope's
Standing and without bending he can touch and rub his knees with either hand
His male organs are concealed in a sheath
His complexion is like bronze, the colour of gold.
His skin is so delicately smooth that no dust cleaves to his body
The down on it grows in single hairs, one to each pore
The small hairs on his body turn upward, every hair of it, blue black in colour like eye-paint, in little curling rings, curling to the right
This babe has a frame divinely straight.
He has the seven convex surfaces
The front half of his body is like a lion's
There is no furrow between his shoulders
His proportions have the symmetry of the banyan tree: the length of his body is equal to the compass of his arms, and the compass of his arms is equal to his height
His bust is equally rounded

His taste is supremely acute.
His jaw is as a lion's.
He has forty teeth,
Regular teeth,
Continuous
The eye is very lustrous. His tongue is very long
He has a divine voice, like a Karavika-bird's.
His eyes are intensely blue
He has the eyelashes of a cow.
Between the eyebrows appears a hairy mole, white and like soft cotton down.
His head is like a royal turban This too counts to him as one of the marks of a Great Man

Chapter VI

IMPACT WITH SUFFERING AND RENUNCIATION

In view of what happened later, the decision of Shuddhodana not to allow his son to come in contact with any suffering was a brave one, though obviously an impractical one. It was natural, however, for a royal parent to do his best to see that his only son escaped the unenviable fate that was predicted of him. He wanted Siddhartha to be his successor and the king of the Sakyas. He wanted him to continue the Kshatriya line in which he was born. Instead, he was faced with something like a fatal blow to everything that he held dear if the prediction were to prove true. Therefore, he made desperate efforts to see that the destiny that was foretold was completely foiled.

The prediction was that the prince would renounce as a result of seeing an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and an ascetic. The king and his courtiers had so far successfully warded off this contingency, and it could be said that they were fairly successful as regards the sight of these four specific things. But it is too much to imagine that the prince had absolutely no occasion to experience pain and suffering, either in his own person or in that of others. Of course, these experiences were sought to be drowned in a round of pleasures, and for the time being at least, the surface of Siddhartha's mind seemed to be calm and quiet like a placid lake without ripples. But the question was whether Siddhartha's subconsciousness was also without any memories and any explosive material which could start a storm at any time. Moreover, even in the case of sense-pleasures, whatever their variety, a point of satiety is often reached sooner or later, and the mind begins to hanker after something higher which can offer an abiding calmness

and a deeper happiness. It was this deeper hunger that prompted Nachiketa, the child philosopher of *Kathopanishad*, to reject the offer of heavenly pleasures in preference to what is called immortality or abiding happiness, which is not dependent on material possessions. It was this inner hankering of the soul which drove Maitreyi, the *brahmavadini* (spiritually inclined) wife of Yagnavalkya Rishi to say 'no' to proferred wealth and to ask for 'that knowledge which would ensure immortality'. Even during the period when Siddhartha led a life of utter luxury, there must have been occasions when his mind turned inwards and when he must have felt that something was wanting in his apparently full life. These under-currents must have been fed by the inner desire to find a permanent anchor, and must have welled up and issued forth in the form of an uncontrollable storm which carried him to the extreme of renunciation, when the occasion arose.

In fact, Siddhartha's earlier and ostensible preoccupation with a life of the senses, and his later renunciation of everything for a life of the spirit, can be rationally explained more on the basis of his having a dual personality in the beginning, than by any other psychological theory. Every one does have a kind of a dual personality, and sometimes a multiple personality, between which a constant struggle is going on. In Siddhartha's case, his father's intense desire to see that his son continued to lead a normal princely family life, made Shuddhodana give very strong but artificial support to the natural tendency of young Siddhartha towards sense pleasures. This ended, however, in a very strong reaction against the suppression of the deeper tendency of the prince to seek something higher. It is this internal combat and crisis, and the dramatic situation that arose out of it which lends charm to the story of Siddhartha's renunciation.

The renunciation of a common man, who, in the eyes of the people, has not much to give up, goes very often unnoticed But when a prince who is the only son and heir to a king, in the prime of his life abandons the kingdom, his lovely wife, and a babe, in quest of something which is intangible and almost unattainable, it attracts the attention of the world One sits up when he reads the story and begins to ponder over the meaning of it all The mellow light of the royal bed-chamber, the reposing but enchanting figure of Yashodhara with the charming little child lying by her side, the most affectionate father, the promise of an assured kingdom, all these sounded empty to the prince that night. At midnight, almost without any immediate or ostensible cause or provocation, and equally without any future plans, Siddhartha deliberately renounced all these for ever What was there for him in the wide world which could be fitting substitutes for all these that he was abandoning except the unwelcome night the hard and uncertain life of a homeless mendicant without any hope or prospect of a secure future Perhaps he was in quest of a mirage may be a spiritual mirage And yet the vague call of the unknown and unseen spirit proved stronger in the case of prince Siddhartha, and he went away after snapping all ties, never never to return as prince again to the kingdom of the Sakyas

The story goes that one day as he was driving in his chariot along the royal road towards the palace park, in spite of all the precautions of the guards and the escort, his eyes lighted on the figure of a decrepit man The old man was bent and could hardly stand He had a sad look and no teeth to speak of, and his hair was all grey He was the very picture of stark misery, without light or lustre in his eyes and without any colour on his face This set the prince thinking about his own plight when he would

be old. He realized that all who are young are bound to be old and be reduced to the wretched condition of the crouching, helpless figure which he saw that day This chain of thought cast a gloom on his jovial temperament. The father observed the change and became concerned, and ordered the attendants and others to be punished He asked the courtiers and servants in the palace to arrange special entertainments and dancing parties. The prince recovered from the shock in a few days' time. This shock was but the first one and a beginning of the chain reaction that had set in in his mind. However happy he looked, he could not shake off the inner effect of the impact of suffering that he had received in so vivid a manner

After a few days, it is said, there was another occasion when he came across a sick man groaning and writhing with pain in his bed which offered neither rest nor respite nor sleep to him. For age to creep over man, at least a certain number of years have to pass. But sickness is something that can attack a man even in the prime of his life or even when he is a child It may be the cause of excruciating pain and utter helplessness and extreme weakness. It may also end in premature death As he pondered over old age, sickness, and death, Siddhartha became extremely miserable and saw that this was the unavoidable lot of every human being, however high-placed he might be. He came to the conclusion that, normally speaking, human life was full of pain, suffering, sorrow, misery and an inevitable chain of them bound man all through. No one was free from them and there was no relief or escape from them. The more he thought and deliberated on these and various other forms of suffering, the more sad he became and the more intensely he began to think of freeing himself

The culminating point was reached when he saw on the road a corpse being carried to the cremation grounds He

followed it, saw the final plight of the body and realized that it was the end of the prince and the pauper, of the beautiful and the ugly, of the child and the grown-up. He was filled with a sense of utter emptiness and he began to laugh at the vanity of human beings. The world with which he was surrounded lost all charm for him and his soul began to seek something which could give some solace from the restlessness that inwardly filled his mind all the time.

Ultimately one day, he came across an ascetic, a Shramana, who had a clean-shaven head. He wore a robe of quite a different type from those worn by house-holders. He had no possessions except a water-bowl and a stick; and yet he seemed to be happier than all others and had a bearing which was dignified and self-possessed. The prince made bold to stop his chariot and question the ascetic. He replied that he had taken to that kind of life in order to free himself from the sufferings, miseries and complexities attendant upon a house-holder's life and that he was happy for the change. The whole picture of human life now stood complete before the prince. He saw that life was full of suffering and misery but at the same time, he saw that there were people who had been trying to find a way out of it and that some of them had succeeded. From that time onwards, Siddhartha's mind began to dwell very often on the problems of life and their solution. He was frankly in search of a path that led man out of the clutches of suffering and misery. It was this trend in his inner mind which ultimately urged him on to renunciation and set him on the road to find a solution of his own.

Siddhartha's renunciation is the turning point in his life and it forms one of the most fascinating stories in world hagiology. Neither the way his mind worked in those days, nor the causes that led to renunciation, nor the example of the ascetic which he followed were very extraordinary

inkling of what was going to happen later that night All the maids and female attendants worked themselves to exhaustion and lay where they were The prince too sank to sleep About midnight he awoke and to his utter disgust saw the ladies lying in a very disorderly and unseemly fashion The cup of disgust for worldly pleasures was full; equally urgent was the call for renunciation He then called his charioteer Channa and ordered him to saddle his favourite horse Kantaka One last temptation arose in his mind to have a look at Yashodhara and her new-born He slyly opened the door of the bed-chamber but being afraid of waking her in his attempt to touch the child, he refrained from doing so and shut the door gently behind him. He left the city on horseback with Channa following him It is said that by morning, he had crossed three state boundaries of Sakyas, Koliyas, and Mallas (about forty-five miles) There he alighted from the horse, undressed himself, handed over his royal robes along with all ornaments to Channa and asked him to return home He then cut off his hair, wore yellow robes, took up the gourd and disappeared in the wilderness of the forest

His favourite horse is said to have died broken-hearted and it did not return Only Channa came back pensively on his pony to tell the sad tale

It would be worthwhile to refer to some Pali texts in connection with the subject of this chapter. Apropos the 'dawn of disgust' in the mind of the prince and his subsequent renunciation, we find some observations like the following in the *Digha Nikaya* XIV On seeing the old and decrepit man, Gautama said to his charioteer, 'drive me back home to my rooms'. He then sat brooding, sorrowful and depressed, thinking, 'shame upon this birth, since to one born, old age comes like this '

This scene and these feelings repeated themselves

when the prince saw a sick man and then a corpse, while driving in his chariot on other occasions along the royal road He exclaimed, 'shame verily upon this thing called birth, since to one born, decay of life, disease and death come in this manner.'

When he drove next, he saw a shaven-headed man, a recluse, wearing the yellow robe. His charioteer told him that the recluse was one who 'had gone forth', that is one who was 'thorough in his religious life, thorough in good actions, thorough in meritorious conduct, thorough in harmlessness and thorough in kindness to all creatures.'

On listening to this and pondering over it, Gautama thought of renouncing the world on the spot When he went back to the palace, he meditated in seclusion: 'from this suffering no one knows a way of escape Oh, when shall a way of escape from this suffering be made known from decay and from death ?'

This impact with suffering and the inner urge to free himself from it is referred to in *Buddhavamsa* XXVI On his visit to his home town after *sambodhi*, Buddha is purported to have said, 'When by chariot and horse I went out of the palace and saw the four signs (the old man, the diseased man, the corpse and the recluse) I for six years fared a faring of painful striving.' The *Vimanavatthu* VII.7 , gives the story of Kantaka, Gautama's horse on which he rode out on the night of renunciation That horse was born as a god in its next birth. To Moggalana who visited the heavens, Kantaka, then a god, said, 'When at midnight my master renounced the world to win enlightenment, he patted my shoulder with his soft hands bright with copper-hued nails, and addressed me saying, "hear me, friend, I will deliver the world when I have attained supreme enlightenment".'

Buddha had immense faith in his future and in his

attaining enlightenment some day Before going to Uruvela he told Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, that he had seen 'the wretchedness of lust' and that he looked upon 'renunciation as peace' In *Suttanipata Pabbajjas*. Buddha says, 'I shall go to the struggle. therein my mind is glad ' In *Mahavastu*, in reply to the prayer of Bimbisara that Buddha should teach him the doctrine after enlightenment, Buddha says, 'I shall win enlightenment, there is no doubt, and having won it, I shall come back and teach you the doctrine, I promise '

practical and useful at this stage to try to understand the idea with which Siddhartha renounced and set about the task of finding a way out of suffering It was suffering and the realization that life was full of it which drove him to renunciation. He believed that the way of the recluse, the ascetic whom he saw was the best This led to his midnight departure from the palace and all that was near and dear to him

It might seem to be a paradox but it is true to experience that though man wants to rid himself of suffering and pain of every kind, it is pain and suffering that make him more and more conscious of himself and his own limitations Physical pain, for instance, is nature's way of making us aware that something is wrong in the working of our bodies The same is the case with mental suffering But for pain and suffering, man would not be conscious of his utter insignificance as an individual It is through these that he realizes what he is and what is his place in the scheme of things It is progressive self-awareness and experience of reality that helps man ultimately to transcend the limitations under which he is labouring as a unit of individual consciousness, and be one with the universal consciousness It was Siddhartha's awareness of suffering that prompted him to probe into the causes of suffering As a result of this probe he found the cause of suffering and then succeeded in transcending it by the removal of the cause of suffering

It may also be observed that neither pain nor suffering is a permanent fixture of life or of our being Physiologically speaking, pain signifies an unhealthy state of the body, a diseased condition, a pathological condition Similar is the case with our feeling of sorrow and suffering. It is not a normal mental or psychological condition Whether the pain or suffering is physical or mental, we feel that it is neither normal nor permanent, we believe

that it is temporary and bound to pass away. We have a rooted faith and a subconscious awareness that once again normality would be restored. The ideal condition, then, should be one of equanimity, of balance, of neither pleasure nor pain, of an awareness which is above the opposites of pleasure and pain. That is why in Sanskrit, both pleasure and pain are classed under the category of sensations (*vedana*, that which makes us aware of something), while pleasure is the sensation that one likes and one wishes to have, pain is the sensation that one dislikes and wishes to avoid. But both these, the tendency to avoid pain as well as the tendency to have pleasure, are the innate desires of an individual It is desire which is the cause both of pleasure and of pain So long as there is desire, both these are inevitable, and equilibrium is impossible

I have stated above that renunciation is but half the battle in the quest for eternal peace. This quest is as old as the hills but the solution has to be worked out by each one for himself. Each man who is hungry has to feed himself if he wants his own hunger to be satisfied. The fact of the whole world having fed itself is not enough to satisfy even a single man who is hungry The problem of life seems to be protean inasmuch as it presents itself in innumerable forms to each man in each age and in each country. In fact, while the problem is one and universal, its solution has to be worked out by each individual for himself Past solutions, *gurus*, wise men and friends may be helpful, but the solution has to be found and the satisfaction experienced by each man by and in himself. If this were not the case, there was no need of so many various ways of trying to find solutions One prophet would have been enough But that is not so Life itself is dynamic and ever evolving, taking humanity along with it None of us for instance, can say, now that Buddha has

found and shown the way, our problem is solved Each one of us has to solve his own problem, and there is a possibility that Buddha's solution may be helpful to many, if not to all Each one has to become a 'Buddha' in his own way to reach the highest state of bliss

The eternal problem of man has been· how to transcend one's limitations (of which one is intensely aware) in every field, physical, vital, mental, moral and spiritual Man's quest for the philosopher's stone, for eternal youth and life and bodily immortality, for infinite knowledge, for free action untrammelled by considerations of right and wrong, good and bad. and finally for identification with the Supreme Spirit, is indicative of man's aspiration, his ideal and the direction of his effort It is this quest and aspiration which has urged in different forms, men and women to supreme efforts in different countries and climes. This is the urge that is at the root of the varied spiritual endeavours of man throughout the ages

To Siddhartha, this problem presented itself in the form of suffering which, in his eyes, filled the very atmosphere in which humanity lived To rise above suffering, to be eternally free from suffering, to attain a status which would be unaffected by suffering became Siddhartha's one goal in life and he set out on his journey To step out of the palace was but his first step.

In the 26th Sutta of *Majjhimanikaya*, there is an important reference to the noble quest which Buddha undertook. After realising the futility of seeking what was subject to birth, old age, disease, death, sorrow and corruption Buddha says, 'Then it occurred to me, monks, why do I seek these thus? What if now, I were to seek the incomparable security of a *nibbana* free from birth, old age, death, sorrow and corruption? I went in search of what is good, in search of the peerless way of desirable peace.'

Buddha went in search of the way that led to detachment, to absence of passion, to cessation, to abatement, to higher knowledge, to contemplation, to full enlightenment, to *nibbana*.

This was his quest, the quest that is eternal. This quest is for a goal for which the human heart yearns intensely like the lover for his far-off beloved.

Chapter VIII

SIDDHARTHA'S SADHANA

Prince Siddhartha who was hardly twenty-nine had taken the plunge and there was no turning back now. His itinerary since his midnight departure from the palace at Kapilavastu up to the time of his *Sambodhi* under the Bodhi-tree in Gaya, has been variously described There are many versions of it As the chronology and places visited differ radically in different canonical and commentary versions and are sometimes even contradictory, it is safer to study the itinerary from the point of view of the psychological development of Siddhartha and the ideological evolution of his final doctrine

The whole period was one of intense *sadhana* for Siddhartha Though ostensibly he sought permanent relief from the sufferings of life, this urge led him to fundamentals and he had to seek satisfaction on the intellectual, emotional, as well as the spiritual level In fact, his whole consciousness, his entire being was involved in this search for the key to a state of mind which would result in transcendance and in the conquest of all kinds of suffering It will be seen that he kept an open mind as regards the methods, and tried every means which appealed to him, with earnestness and determination

On that full-moon day of *Uttarashadha*, after riding the whole night in the eastern direction from Kapilavastu, Siddhartha sent away Kantaka his horse and Channa, his attendant, and found himself in the morning on the outskirts of the town Anupiya of the Malla country

Though a Kshatriya of the orthodox type, he had already lost faith in Vedic ritualism and the house-holder's way. He did not believe that those would take him beyond

all suffering He had therefore chosen the Shramana way of life, that is, the way of wandering ascetics who were not attached to family life and who performed no Vedic rites

He does not seem to have tarried long in Anupiya and he marched on to Vaishali which was known in those days to be full of learned *Shramanas* and Brahmanas. It is mentioned that there were some sixty-two different schools of thought prevalent at that time. It cannot be imagined that the differences between these schools were all fundamental or even doctrinal Many of the differences might have been only in externals This mention of sixty-two schools signifies that there were too many schools and schisms and that there was little co-ordination or mutual understanding among them Siddhartha did not identify himself with any of these schools On the other hand he seems to have been convinced of the futility of these schisms and their utter incapacity to show the real way to an earnest seeker Among the schools, however, he seems to have been impressed somewhat by the *Nirganthas* (those who had no knots or problems to solve, also, those who wore seamless clothes) The *Nirgantha Nathaputra* is mentioned in the *Jatakas* He is said to have been no other than Mahavira himself There is no doubt that Mahavira did belong to the *Nirgantha* school, though later he founded Jainism Mahavira was a contemporary of Buddha and is said to have died a little earlier than Buddha

The *Shramana* ascetics generally laid great stress on complete renunciation of hearth and home and family life. on observance of vows, severe austerities, and practices involving drastic control and supression of the senses A reference has already been made to a school of thought among Brahmans, may be a minority, who also favoured renunciation and asceticism But the Brahmanical ascetics

belonging to this class emphasised concentration, meditation, thinking, discussion and so on instead of only hard *tapas* and mortifying austerities Possibly Alar Kalam and Uddaka Ramaputta belonged to this class of ascetics

Siddhartha seems to have particularly followed for a long time the methods of sense-control and self-mortification laid down by the *Nirgrantha* and other schools of ascetics There is no end to the variety of observances and austerities that Siddhartha went through For the time being, he believed in them and he had a few companions also who practised them. It is mentioned that he went and stayed near Varanasi and had five companions, and the eldest of them all was called Kondanna

The type of the austerities Siddhartha observed may be gathered from various descriptions in the Canons and the *Jatakas.* He seems to have resorted sometimes even to such practices as living on the dung of young calves, and so on Such practices were common among the Aghori school of ascetics They aim at overcoming the feelings of disgust and dislike by such practices The severest, however, of the practices was that of progressive reduction in eating food, carried even to the point of total fasting The *Nirgrantha Shramanas* attached great importance to this kind of penance Even now, Jainism which was influenced by the *Nirgrantha* doctrine, enjoins on its followers fasting of different types and of different degrees of severity In fact, among Jains, abandoning the body before natural death by fasting (*Prayopaveshan*) is one of the most exalted ways of departure from this world

On one occasion Siddhartha lived on very scanty food The following description gives a good idea of his plight at that time ·

"Then I thought, what if I were to take food only in small amounts, as much as my hollowed palm could

hold, soup of beans, vetches, chickpeas or pulse? .. My body became extremely lean. The mark on my seat was like a camel's footprint through the scanty food The bones of my spine were bent and were like a row of spindles As the beams of an old bamboo shed stick out, so did my ribs stick out And as in a deep well the deep low-lying sparkling of the water is seen, so in my eye-sockets was seen the deep low-lying sparkle of my eyes. And as a bitter gourd cut off raw is cracked and withered through want of sun, so was the skin of my head withered When I thought I would touch the skin of my stomach, I actually caught my spine, and when I thought I would touch my spine, I took hold of the skin of my stomach, so much did the skin on my stomach cling to my spine through scanty food When I thought I would ease myself, I thereupon fell prone through weakness To give relief to my body I stroked my limbs with my hand. And as I did so, the decayed hairs fell from my body . Some human beings seeing me then said, the ascetic Gautama is black, others said, not black is the ascetic Gautama but he is brown, still others said, not black is the ascetic Gautama nor brown, his skin is like that of a fish So much had the pure clean colour of my skin been destroyed by fasting Then I thought, those ascetics and Brahmans in the past, who have suffered most sudden, sharp, keen, severe pains, have not suffered more than this "

But when all these drastic and almost *asuric* methods failed to give Siddhartha the equanimity of mind for which he was striving, when he saw that all those passions and urges that had earlier filled his mind, returned, perhaps with greater vigour after resumption of food, he came to the conclusion that that was not the way that would lead

him to his goal His severe mortification did not help him in attaining the truly supersensuous and 'superhuman', noble knowledge and insight

Siddhartha concluded that there must be another way to enlightenment He resumed taking his normal food and began to regain his original strength and colour But his five companions who had been all along with him, suspected that Siddhartha had fallen from his path and would now be a prey to the craving of his senses Therefore they parted company with him in spite of an assurance and remonstrances by Siddhartha that his hunger for the right path was as strong as before and that he would seek his goal by some method other than that which they had all followed so long

Prince Siddhartha, by going to the extreme in the direction of control and suppression of the senses and of the emotions, had not been able to make any advance on the spiritual front He saw therefore the futility of that method of suppression and mortification, and he exclaimed that there is and there must be another way to enlightenment

Neither the way of indulgence of the senses, as when he rolled in luxury as a prince at Kapilavastu, nor the way of their suppression, as when he went through the severest mortification, could lead Siddhartha to the goal that he sought so eagerly and earnestly

The path to the supreme state of peace lay obviously in a direction other than those which he had tried hitherto with such single-minded devotion and unremitting ardour

It seems that Siddhartha then left Varanasi and marched on to Magadha and its capital Rajagriha It was then a big city If Vaishali was the capital of the mighty federal republic of the Vijjians, Rajagriha or Girivraja (assemblage of hills) was the capital of the powerful king Bimbisara, the father of Ajatsatru On hearing that a great ascetic, who

was once a prince, had come to his capital, Bimbisara is said to have given him a royal welcome, and being overwhelmed, offered him the whole kingdom But Siddhartha was hardly in a mood to think in terms of acquiring or accepting kingdoms. He had left one belonging to his father in search of 'the kingdom of heaven' Siddhartha politely declined the offer saying that he had given up his own kingdom to seek something else than material wealth and princely power.

Round about Rajagriha, Siddhartha came in contact with Alar Kalam, a Brahman ascetic who was well-known for his Yoga practices and who had reputedly attained the highest Siddhartha's meeting with Alar Kalam has to be considered as very important in his spiritual history, since this was the crucial moment when his mind turned towards the kind of *sadhana* which ultimately led him to enlightenment The preliminary steps in Yogic practices, such as the postures, deep breathing, alternate breathing, holding the breath and so on, were not new to him It was obviously mystical concentration, meditation, and an attempt at freeing the individual consciousness from its entanglements with the senses, towards which Siddhartha was heading The conversation between Siddhartha and Alar Kalam, as reported in the Canons and the *Jatakas*, is very interesting. It runs as follows —

> " 'I wish, friend Kalam, to practise the religious life in this doctrine and discipline' Thereupon Alar Kalam said to me, 'Abide friend, such is the doctrine that an intelligent mind in no long time may of himself comprehend, realize, and attain my teaching and abide in it' In no long time and quickly did I master that doctrine. So to this extent merely by moving the lips and repeating what had been recited, I and others made the profession, 'I declare the doctrine of the knowledge,

the doctrine of the elder I know and perceive' Then I thought, 'It is not merely by faith that Alar proclaims his doctrine, that of himself he has comprehended, realized, attained it, and abides in it Verily, Alar abides knowing and perceiving his doctrine' So I approached Alar and said to him, 'Friend Kalam, what is the extent of this doctrine which of yourself you have comprehended, realized, and attained, and which you proclaim?' Thereupon Alar proclaimed the attainment of the state of Nothingness Then I thought, 'Alar has faith, but I too have faith Not only has he energy, I too have energy. Not only has he mindfulness, I too have mindfulness Not only has he concentration, I too have concentration Not only has he wisdom, I too have wisdom What if I strive to realize that doctrine of which Alar proclaims that of himself he has comprehended, realized, attained it, and abides in it' Then in no long time I quickly comprehended, realized, and attained the doctrine, and abode in it"

But obviously Siddhartha was not satisfied with this attainment He thought, 'This doctrine extending to the attainment of the state of Nothingness does not conduce to aversion, absense of passion, cessation, tranquillity, higher knowledge, *Nirvana*'

Siddhartha's search, therefore, continued, in the course of which he visited Uddaka Ranaputta. Siddhartha is said to have had similar discussions and intimate conversations with him The doctrine of Uddaka, taught him by his father, was that of a state of mind which was 'neither-consciousness-nor-nonconsciousness' With this teaching too, Siddhartha could not be satisfied

It may be noted here that the stages of consciousness described as having been attained by Alar Kalam and Uddaka were those which, according to the Buddhist doc-

trine, fell short of the highest by quite a few stages. But certainly they were in line with the later Buddhist doctrine and *sadhana*. These stages, however, could not satisfy Siddhartha, the indefatigable seeker. He moved on, therefore, towards Uruvela in the Magadha country. This place is described in the canons and the *Jatakas* as a military camp (*sena-nigama*). Siddhartha himself is said to have described it thus: "Then striving after the good, and searching for the supreme state of peace, I gradually made my way to the Magadhas, and went to Uruvela, the army township. There I saw a beautiful spot with a pleasant grove, a river flowing delightfully with clear water and good fords and round about a place for seeking alms. Then I thought, truly it is a beautiful spot. This surely is a fit place for the striving of a high-born one intent on striving. Then I sat down there saying, a fit place is this for striving."

The practice of meditation of a particular type in this place was the fourth and final step by Siddhartha towards the highest attainment which he had set before himself as his goal, if we count renunciation as the first, austerities as the second, and his meditation according to the instructions of Alar Kalam and Uddaka as the third.

In Uruvela region, Siddhartha chose a big shady Peepul or Bo-tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) as the site for his meditative practices. This tree is traditionallly recognized as a sacred one and is specially recommended for *dhyana* (meditation) and *sadhana* by Yogis. The river Nairanjara, now called Phalgu, which flows by the city of Gaya, is found at some distance from that site. It was under this tree that Siddhartha became the Buddha by attaining enlightenment. It was here that spiritual light burst on his consciousness and illumined every corner of it.

By the time that Siddhartha settled down for a final attempt to reach the highest state of peace that he was

seeking, he had gone through a series of important experiences He had learnt that extremes neither of pleasure nor of pain, nor of mortification were of any use. They were not conducive to attainment of peace He was now convinced that the mind could get no peace so long as the surging passions and desires were in possession of it He began his new *sadhana* which was ultimately to be the Buddha-Marga for all to follow Control and not suppression, the golden mean and not the extremes, purification of the mind, analysis of the cause of suffering and the removal of the cause of suffering by analysis, understanding and a determined effort were the main features of this new path In the course of his *sadhana*, he adopted the easy and common Yogic posture called *Padmasana* (lotus pose) with the spine erect and with the head, the neck and the spine in a straight line He faced in turns, the east the south, the west and the north, and with eyes fixed and mind concentrated, filled each quarter with the pure emotion of friendship (*maitri*), compassion (*karuna*), and welfare of all (*kalyana*), extending it to every creature and being in that quarter In course of time, as a result of this way of meditation his mind became purified and completely free from all evil ideas and selfish desires He then began to experience a kind of peace and joy which was almost supersensuous and which was extremely soothing

He then remembered again the spontaneous joy and happiness that he had experienced in his childhood when he was sitting under the cool shade of a rose-apple tree in his father's garden at Lumbini There when he was without sensual desires and without any evil ideas, he enjoyed a kind of supreme joy and happiness in a trance Siddhartha s experience in the early stages when he was meditating under the Bodhi-tree are referred to as being akin to that joy which he had experienced as a child Siddhartha refers to

it in one of the Pali canons as joy and happiness, arising from seclusion, and combined with reasoning and investigation He thought that that was the way to enlightenment. He welcomed the happy state without any apprehensions about it, and gained confidence as he advanced along that path of meditation.

His advance was rapid. His concentration became more intense and his meditation more steady. His mind began to be calmer and quieter and firmer as well. The joy he began to experience became progressively far more prolonged and deeper. A mood of internal serenity settled down and there was no necessity for repeated reasoning or investigation This mood led to equanimity towards the opposites of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain His mind was 'purified, cleansed, spotless, with all defilements gone, supple, dextrous and firm'. During this kind of meditation he began to forget his individuality and his ego This stage is described as one in which, 'Ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose Darkness was dispelled, light arose.' He who abides vigilant, strenuous and resolute would reach that stage He then concentrated on destruction of the roots of ignorance and evil and every kind of craving And ultimately he succeeded, but not without a last battle royal with Mara, the god of desires.

This battle with Mara is the symbolization of the struggle of Siddhartha with the tail-ends and remnants of various desires and cravings rooted in his subconsciousness By constant meditation and awareness, by almost ceaseless vigilance, he saw to it that no evil thoughts entered his mind and no desires became active But still the roots lay deep in his subconsciousness It was these that he had to deal with in his battle with Mara, the personification of desire or craving. By determination, Siddhartha rose superior to all the temptations, he saw light, the light of

knowledge and wisdom and became a Buddha On the midnight of the full-moon day of Vaishakh, he attained Sambhodi, enlightenment. All ignorance disappeared, the Law of Being and Becoming stood unveiled in all its majesty. No doubts remained unsolved and the path lay clear before him. He was then in a position to say, 'No new house shall any more be built for the soul or the indweller. He shall be free and shall remain unbound like the winds'

A few texts of the Pali canon may now be referred to

One can find a detailed account of the discussions of Buddha with Alar and Ramaputta, in *Majjhimanikaya* (*26th Sutta*) and *Pariyesana Sutta* (*Majjhima* i. 160). As regards some other kinds of *sadhana*, here below are a few interesting references

While wandering alone and staying here and there in the wilds in search of truth, Buddha had to struggle hard to overcome 'fear and terror' In the 4th *Sutta* of *Majjhimanikaya*, we have a full account of that struggle and the technique of *sadhana* he adopted for success "Hard is it to live in the depths of the forest, in remote places; difficult to rejoice in solitude and retirement, unsettling to the mind of the monk who has not reached tranquillity" Having said this, he points out that the reason for disturbance of mind and for fear and terror is the impurity of the mind—'They (those who are afraid) are not pure in body, action, word, thought or way of life' He then went forth on auspicious nights of full-moon and half-moon to 'shrines in grove and forest and under the trees' to stay in places of horror and hair-raising, for overcoming both He said now, 'I might contemplate and analyse both fear and horror' By vigilance, by purification of mind, by discarding desires, by analysing causes of fear, 'I could overcome that fear and terror' At the end of this struggle he could say, 'a being without illusion (about fear) has been born, for the

good of many, for the benefit of many, out of compassion for the world, for the blessing, the welfare and the happiness of gods and men'

Regarding the attainment of enlightenment there is an interesting account in *Majjhimanikaya* (*Sutta* 36). It is only those aspirants who are 'inwardly rid' of the 'wish of desire, the snare of desire, the dizziness of desire, the thirst of desire, and the fever of desire,' who are capable of taking the path to *Nibbana* Neither those who are dull enough not to have strong desires, nor those who though swayed by them are not yearning to rise above them, can take to the path A man who is ripe for taking up the path is likened to a piece of wood which was once wet and damp but which is now dry and away from water and which comes in contact with a spark of fire which can enkindle it

In the *Mahasacchaka Sutta* of *Majjhimanikaya*, Buddha while speaking to Aggivessana refers to breathing exercises He says that merely the physical exercises of Hatha Yoga are not capable of directly leading man to wisdom, insight and the incomparable full awakening. He informs us that on account of contemplation and exercises in steadying the mind, he rose to a level of consciousness where he was free from any disturbing feelings of pain or strain This was the result of his concentration on *jnana* or knowledge without any breathing exercises.

There were other higher stages, which he reached by further *sadhana* The *Sutta* has the following: 'Then Aggivessana, This came to me I remember, indeed, once while my father was doing the work (ploughing) of the Sakyan, I sitting under the shade of a rose-apple tree, aloof from desire, aloof from things not good, with thinking and with thought sustained, entering to have become a dweller in the first *jnana*, born of solitude, full of joy and happiness Then Aggivessana, came to me the consciousness—this

is the way of enlightenment why should I fear this happiness which comes otherwise than by sense-desire otherwise than by things not good

There were yet some more steps to go and he marched on and 'after suppressing attention and investigation I entered on and became a dweller in the second *jnana*, born of that interior concentration of mind, when reasoning and investigation cease, tranquil. uplifted, full of joy and happiness' Further again, 'by fading out of joy, I remained equable, mindful and attentive, producing in my body that happy state of insight of which the Aryans say, equable and mindful, he dwells in happiness' This was the third *jnana* stage

But there were further stages "With my mind thus composed, pure, translucent, straightforward, cleansed of dross, supple, ready for action, firm, incorruptible, I directed it to the destruction of delusions Thus knowing, thus seeing, my mind was set free from the delusion of hankering after sensuous life, was set free from all delusion, from the hankering after becoming, and was set free from ignorance In this freedom and emancipation this knowledge arose Rebirth has been destroyed The higher life has been fulfilled' '

On the eve of enlightenment, the epic battle on the spiritual plane took place between Buddha and Mara in which the latter was completely worsted '*Lalita Vistara*', which is a Sanskrit work on Buddha and is based on the Pali texts and other sources available, about the second century A D. has something very interesting to say about Buddha's battle with Mara

Mara is not merely the god of death, but he symbolises attachment to the world of senses He is not exactly the Devil or Satan of other mythologies In fact, unlike them, he recommends good deeds, meritorious actions, sacrificial

ceremonies to Buddha. But the fact is that even those things which were supposed to lead a man only to heaven, are hindrances to real spiritual life and realisation of Truth. In *Lalita Vistara* (327), Mara is designated as *Namuchi* (name of a Vedic demon) also and he tempts Buddha to perform sacrifices and leave alone the path to *Nirvana*. Buddha rejects Namuchi's advice with contempt and at the same time with full understanding. and says, 'will, energy, and likewise wisdom, are found in me. I do not see anyone in the world who can shake me from my resolve. . Lusts, aversion, hunger and thirst, craving, sloth, indolence. fear, doubt, anger, hypocrisy, gain, fame. honour, false glory, boasting, condemning others, are all your army Oh, Namuchi. I shall crush with my wisdom your whole army, like an unbaked earthen bowl by water. Fully aware and wholly wise. I follow my path. What can you do?'

Chapter IX

SAMBODHI—ENLIGHTENMENT

The search for what he considers to be the highest for the time being has been the constant and abiding characteristic of man's endeavour for progress. He is equally anxious to establish his mastery over nature and over his own mind. In the physical world, man seeks mastery over matter through the knowledge of its laws and through the technique of the use of those laws for his own purpose. Science and technology, therefore, are the twin means of mastery over the world of matter. Similar has been the ambition of man for mastery over his self and the activities going on in his own consciousness. This inner mastery he seeks through the knowledge and understanding of the laws of mind and through the technique of taking advantage of those laws for complete conquest of the power of consciousness. Real and full perfection of man would indeed consist in the mastery of both the physical forces and the forces of consciousness; because both these worlds and forces meet in the mind of man, act and react on each other and are inextricably interspersed and intertwined.

Since the very dawn of religious and spiritual thought, man has been generally holding the view that body and soul, matter and spirit, are opposed to each other and that the body and matter are impediments to the full expression of the soul and spirit. This led religious minds and earnest souls who were in search of spiritual happiness to renounce physical pleasures and comforts, and sometimes even simple conveniences. This class of people neglected what they thought to be the world of matter (devoid of spirit) and tried to live in the world of spirit (devoid of matter). But to-day though science does not recognise

anything like spirit, it is tending to prove that matter and energy are not only convertible terms but that, what exists is only energy which continuously appears in the form of matter A statement may be hazarded here that the independent existence of matterless energy and energyless matter are almost inconceivable. Matter is the manifestation of energy and energy is potential matter. In a certain sense, energy alone exists and its existence is known only through matter. If we make a similar statement with regard to the world of consciousness also, we can say that so far as man is concerned, his world of matter and his world of consciousness are practically inseparable and indivisible To try to separate them is to try to cut Reality into two and make the fatal mistake of calling only one of the halves as the total whole.

But it is obvious that this idea of perfection is not yet universally accepted or recognised. The idea of the co-ordinated development of body, mind, and spirit and their harmonious integration in a perfect human personality has yet to gain ground In the meanwhile, old ideas of perfection persist But it is quite clear that the human spirit is evolving in the direction of integration of all the forces within the personality and a perfect fully integrated man is bound to emerge one day. To think that all knowledge and ideas about perfection and about human evolution have been stated and exhausted by past philosophies and seers and saints and sages is to take it for granted that the human mind is incapable of new ideas of progress It is as absurd as it would have been a few years ago to say that electric energy is the last natural power that man could discover With the evolution of the human psyche, his powers of consciousness and the highest goal to be reached by it are bound to advance.

Siddhartha as a prince had at his beck and call every

convenience and pleasure that physical science of those days could offer. But he had deliberately abandoned the path of pleasure He was convinced of its being ephemeral and ultimately a source of suffering He had decided upon finding a path to peace, to abiding peace and happiness We have already been acquainted with the various *sadhanas* he went through, the difficulties that he had to surmount, the decisive battle he had to wage with Mara, the god of desire, and finally the enlightenment he attained

Even in the days of Buddha among the religious-minded people there were two schools of thought, namely the school which believed in complete renunciation of life for the sake of salvation and spiritual bliss, and the school which believed that the attainment of bliss was possible even when living a normal householder s life Buddha began as a believer in the school of renunciation and followed the hard practices of that school which tended to mortify the flesh to the utmost. Buddha however was not only not satisfied with the school of mortification but came to the conclusion that it was detrimental to speedy attainment of the highest goal In fact, he struck a new path He, no doubt, renounced the normal life of a householder but he also gave up severe penance and mortifying practices after trying them He found that though renunciation was necessary for transcending suffering, severe and mortifying practices which crippled the normal faculties and functioning of man were detrimental to the single-minded pursuit of the highest spiritual goal He therefore laid emphasis on the middle path, or the balanced life or in the words of the Gita, '*Yuktahara viharasya yukta cheshtasya karmasu, yukta-swapnavabodhasya yogo bhavati dukhaha*' It was ultimately this middle path that landed him in the realm of enlightenment.

The renunciation of prince Siddhartha gave us Buddha,

and his *Sambodhi* gave us Buddhism. If the call to renunciation had not come, Siddhartha would have remained a prince like any other, enjoying life's varied pleasures and oblivious of the deeper meaning and ineffable joy that sustains the very roots of the life-force. If after renunciation and *Sadhana* he had not attained *Sambodhi*, he would have been like any other wandering *sadhu*, a seeker, a *sadhaka*, and not a *Sidhha*, a perfect man. It was the new way of *Sadhana* which Siddhartha adopted that gave him progressively the peace and satisfaction he was seeking all the time. It was that peace and light which assured him that the path he followed was correct, and inspired him to preach it to others. His teaching and preaching were rational and logical; they were based on the realism of suffering and on the practical remedies that he prescribed on the basis of his experiences and experiments. But all these gained weight and authority on account of the imprimatur of *Sambodhi*, spiritual realisation and enlightenment.

The legitimate end of all meditation is *Sambodhi* or full spiritual knowledge and realisation. The question may be asked as to what place *samadhi* occupies in the process. Samadhi is a stage on the way. But it should not be confused with *Sambodhi*. *Samadhi* is that experience where the individual soul by its power of concentration experiences complete attunement with the Universal Soul. For *Sambodhi*, one has to strive still further. The experience of *Sambodhi* has not been described anywhere in detail, in fact it is indescribable. But some indication may be given by saying that it is an experience where the whole of the consciousness or rather the whole being of the aspirant seems to be lit up and suffused with the highest spiritual knowledge without any shadow of doubt about the nature of Reality. It is knowledge of Reality by identity with it.

It is a complete possession by the individual soul of the very substance and secret of highest knowledge of self and Over-soul In such a condition as that, the correlation between the various experiences and the categories of existence stand clearly revealed The Upanishad says that when there is *Sambodhi*, the knots in the heart are all unravelled and every doubt stands cleared

Infinite peace, complete sense of fulfilment, full and clear knowledge of Reality and ineffable bliss may be said to be the characteristics of *Sambodhi* The full content of *Sambodhi* however, must be said to be incommunicable. It is not sleep though there may be for the time being, the calmness and the quiescence and the immobility of the body and mind; the consciousness in *Sambodhi* goes far beyond body-mind consciousness and is full of wakeful illumination It is not only *samadhi* because it is the result perhaps of many *samadhis* In addition to the joy of communion, there is in *Sambodhi* the supreme joy of enlightenment

Buddha has given the name of *nirvana* to salvation or the final aim of human beings *Nirvana* by itself means extinction or dissolution A man who has attained *nirvana* is supposed to be free from the cycle of birth and death It follows that there is then neither existence of the cause of suffering nor of the self It is also sometimes called *shoonya*, that is, zero or nothingness or absolute vacancy, the absence of anything that can be affected or changed

Critics say that *nirvana* is something which is negative, as against the idea of salvation, redemption or *moksha* which is said to be positive Whatever the word-meaning of *nirvana* may be, it has been described as a state where there is neither being nor becoming, neither death nor life, some state of being which is beyond all these *Nirvana*, therefore, cannot exactly be said to be a negative idea That state which remains or establishes itself when a man's

consciousness is beyond joy and sorrow and all the relativities is called *nirvana*. How can it be characterised as negative? Because by calling it negative, we place it in juxtaposition to positive? But both negative and positive are relative terms. The land of *nirvana* is the land beyond relativities

The attainment of *Sambodhi* was the supreme moment in the life of Buddha. He could have passed away in that condition, that is his spirit could have left his body, in which case there would have been only a Buddha, if only people had known that he had attained during life that stage of consciousness, but there would have been no Buddhism After the experience of *Sambodhi*, Buddha's consciousness re-entered the nomal world of dualities and relativities of pleasure and pain. of sorrow and joy, of life and death, but he could now remain detached and unaffected by them. The world was the same as it was and it was following the same laws of nature as before But he was a changed man His consciousness was now a denizen of a new dimension. He looked upon everything in the world with a new insight.

Buddha could now feel the suffering of the people and see the ignorance in which they were steeped. He was moved by compassion and took pity on humanity, which was caught up in the whirl of joy and sorrow, in the cycle of life and death, both of which ultimately spelt pain, continuous and recurring to human consciousness. The two alternatives which presented themselves before him were, whether he should switch back into the benign infinitude of *Sambodhi* or try to give a helping hand to those who were drowning in the sea of *samsar* It was he alone who could and had to decide and he decided in favour of helping humanity.

A few canonical texts may be referred to here

Since the nature and content of *Sambodhi* is incommuni-

cable in words, it is always difficult to describe it. It is in the nature of an intuitionistic flash and an almost supersensuous illumination of the whole inner being of the aspirant. It can be recognised by its effects and influences just as the existence of light may be known by its radiating rays and their effect on the darkness around.

In the *Mahavagga* of Vinaya Pitaka we come across a reference to the immediate result of *Sambodhi* on Buddha. After *Sambodhi*, Buddha sat in *padmasan* for seven days under the Bodhi Tree 'enjoying the bliss of emancipation'. He contemplated and came to know and experience as to how 'things come to be' and how 'ill' is born and destroyed. He exclaimed, 'verily when things become manifest (as they had become manifest to him) to the ardent, meditating on Reality (Brahman) all his doubts fade away, since he understands the 'thing-with-cause'.'

After some time, he is described as having sat under the Ajpala Banyan Tree and then under the Muchalinda Tree for seven days. There he pronounced the solemn utterance, 'Happy the solitude of him who is content, who has heard the Truth, who sees. Happy is non-malice in this world, self-restraint towards all beings that have life. Happy is passionlessness in this world, the getting beyond all sense desires. The suppression of that conceit which makes one assert 'I am', this truly is the highest happiness.'

In the same text, there is a reference which may be said to be direct about the intuitionistic nature of *Sambodhi*. In Buddha's conversation with Brahma Sampati regarding his own plans after *Sambodhi*, Buddha says, 'I have penetrated this Dhamma which is profound, difficult to perceive and understand, which brings quietude of heart, which is exalted, which is unattainable by reason (*na medhaya*, according to Upanishads), is abstruse, intelligible only to the wise. This is hard to attain for common men busy with the world·

This tranquilisation of all synergies, (activities, *samskaras*) the renouncing of all the grounds of rebirth, the destruction of craving, the absence of passion, this ceasing, this *Nibbana*' He then says that he is inclined to be quiet and not to *preach* to others

The relation between *Sambodhi*, its sequel of perfect knowledge and the urge to preach the path of knowledge to others is seen here in a single utterance. We now proceed to the great decision of Buddha to convey the message to the world.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT DECISION

THE decision as to whether to go forth for preaching or not was not an easy one for Buddha to arrive at. Moreover, while the decision was of the utmost importance from his personal point of view, it was of far greater importance to others, and was of world significance, as it later proved to be. The history of Buddhism starts from the moment of this decision. Buddha had now *Nirvana* in the palm of his hand. It was his for the asking. But he thought that it could wait and ought to wait till he had put an end to the suffering of humanity by showing people the path which was by then as clear as daylight to him. All his experiences since childhood, his renunciation, his hard thinking on the problems of life, his discussions with learned men of his times, the severe austerities which had heightened his consciousness through mortification and suffering, and ultimately his meditation had all crystallised into a definite gospel of life which promised the follower of that gospel, cessation of all suffering and ultimate *Nirvana*.

The decision taken by Buddha and the pros and cons involved are worthy of being considered from the point of view of individual psychology and of the social significance of individual attainments. Buddha had evolved a philosophy of life and a path which to him seemed the best for freeing himself from all suffering. Should he go alone along that path and be free, or should he think it obligatory on him to take the people along with him? That was the question which confronted him.

Man is an individual and the moment he is out of his mother's womb, he begins to develop the awareness of individual existence and begins to feel more and more that

he is an individual He also often follows the line of action which seems to do good to him alone and perhaps to no one else. Possibly many times he does things which are beneficial to himself but even harmful to others.

Man is also a social being. He craves for society, for companionship, for corporate existence and is prone naturally to social life. He is dependent on it for his very existence and growth and even for what he becomes by his own effort, he has to thank human society. Unfortunately he forgets this truth very often. His true relationship with society may not always be very obvious. But since he owes everything to society, it is obligatory on him that he pays back the debt that he owes to it Traditional Indian thought lays down that each individual is born with a debt to God, to his parents and ancestors, and to the seers of old and that these debts have to be paid by suitable action by each man during his lifetime. It was rightly said, "Render unto Ceaser Ceasar's coin " If each one does so, it is only natural and proper. If, however, he fails to do so, he becomes a defaulter and a sinner to that extent. The *Gita* goes to the extent of saying that even in the matter of simple eating, he who cooks for himself alone, is a 'thief'. Even the aspiration of an individual to rise higher and higher is but like the spearhead of the wishes and desires of the people around him; and if he succeeds in achieving something and attains fulfilment, his society is in many ways a helper and a participant in that achievement. It is incumbent upon him to take people into confidence and give them the secret of his success. In fact, the hour of the greatest attainment of an individual is precisely the hour when he should be ready to offer his full services and render himself most useful to society Otherwise, it would be like an actor who makes up in the green room but fails to appear on the stage

to each other Nor are they conflicting They are not exclusive of each other There can be a synthesis of these two schools of thought as the *Gita* has pointed out Activism can be based on the highest spiritual level one could attain and thus the conflict between quietism and activism can be wiped out Such action is called '*nishkama Karma*', action without attachment

Buddha did not believe that his task was done when he attained *Sambodhi* The choice before him was either to enter *Nirvana* or to be busy conveying his message to suffering humanity He chose the latter

In a way, the question assumes a metaphysical character when the unity with society has to be realised by each separate individual by a kind of spiritual endeavour and experience It might be that an individual, out of consideration for mutual benefit or casual sympathy, serves his fellowmen But that kind of sympathy and ethical tendency cannot form the bedrock of the feeling of the unity of life It must be ultimately founded on the realisation that spirit is one and indivisible and that the unseen links that bind individuals to individuals and to society are unbreakable. It is in this sense that the Upanishad says that when the *atman* or the soul of man feels one with the Universal Soul, it crosses beyond all illusion and sorrow. The individual merges into and lives in the ocean of *ananda*, that is, infinite joy, which is the very source and the basis of all existence, conscious or unconscious

It was Buddha's compassion which is another name for empathy or the feeling of identification with the suffering of others, that called him back to action in the form of delivering the message of the 'Middle Way' Instead of slipping into the ecstatic beatitude or beatific ecstacy of *Nirvana*, he plunged into the ocean of human life, full of suffering, and

provided for struggling humans a boat, a '*yana*' whereby they could cross the ocean of existence

It is this great decision on the part of Buddha to share with humanity the light of wisdom which led him first to his old associates at Sarnath and then to the other parts of Magadha, Vaishali, and Kosala, where he trekked and wandered and preached till his last breath

A few things which transpired before the decision was taken are worth noting Buddha had gone through a fiery ordeal and his epic fight with Mara had been quite exhausting He had sat in continuous contemplation for days without caring for hunger or thirst The *Jatakas* have given us a beautiful story about how he broke his long fast on this occasion Sujata, a lady of rank in the nearby town, had heard of Gautama and his great renunciation As soon as she learnt about his fast, she took sweet food to him and he broke his fast with that food after Enlightenment

The *Mahavagga* of the Vinaya texts mentions that after Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, Buddha sat crosslegged for a week 'enjoying the bliss of emancipation' Then dawned upon him clearly the knowledge of the 'causal chain' or 'how things come to be' The chain is as below —

Because of ignorance, synergies (or activities)

Because of synergies, consciousness

Because of consciousness, mind and body

Because of mind and body, the sixfold provinces (of the senses).

Because of the sixfold provinces, contact

Because of contact, feeling

Because of feeling, craving

Because of craving grasping

Because of grasping, becoming

Because of becoming, birth

Because of birth, decay, and death, sorrow, lamentation, ill, grief, and despair.

Such is the coming to pass of this 'entire body of ill'

If this chain is to be snapped, one has to proceed in the reverse order so that 'the entire body of ill' ceases

It is very interesting to note that the above-mentioned texts also refer to two incidents long before Buddha decided to preach and went to Isipattana.

One incident was, that a Brahman of a haughty disposition went to Buddha when he was sitting under the Ajapala Banyan Tree for seven days after leaving the Bodhi Tree The Brahman asked the question, 'by what Gautama does one become a Brahman and what are the characteristics which make a man a Brahman?' With great calmness, and confidence born of real experience, Buddha pronounced this solemn utterance. 'That Brahman who is not haughty not impure, self-restrained, who is a master of knowedge who has led the holy life, that Brahman may rightly speak the holy word, he who is puffed up with nothing in the holy world'. The Brahman went satisfied.

The next important incident mentioned is the visit of two merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika when Buddha was sitting under the Rajayatana tree. He went to that tree after sitting for seven days under Ajapala tree. They offered him rice-cake and honey-comb and asked for a blessing from him They had been attracted by his personality. He would not eat the food out of hand and so they gave him a stone bowl He took the food in that bowl and ate The merchants were immensely pleased They said

'we take our refuge, Lord, in the Blessed one and in the Dhamma, may the Blessed one receive us as disciples who from this day forth, while our life lasts, have taken refuge in you'

These were the first in the world to become lay disciples of the Blessed One. It should be noted, however, that they mention here their allegiance to Buddha and Dhamma only Obviously the *Sangha* came later and it was after that that the triple loyalty to Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha became the basis of Buddhist following

Then doubt arose in Buddha's mind, according to *Mahavagga*, and he said, 'now if I teach the Dhamma, and other men are not able to understand my preaching, there would result but weariness and annoyance for me' He was inclined to remain in quietude and not to preach the Dhamma

Here the *Mahavagga* describes the internal conflict in the mind of Buddha and brings in Brahma Sampati, who comes down from heaven and persuades Buddha to preach the Dhamma Brahma is purported to have said, 'the world is in pains and perishes if the new Dhamma is not preached to the people' He added 'there are beings whose mental eyes are darkened by scarcely any dust; but if they do not hear the Dhamma, they cannot attain salvation. There will be they who understand the Dhamma.' He appealed to Buddha, 'the Dhamma hitherto manifested in the country of Magadha has been impure, thought out by contaminated men. But do thou now open the door of the Immortal; let them hear the Dhamma of the Spotless one'. He further appealed saying, 'As a man standing on a rock on a mountain's top, might command the view of people all around, thus Wise One, ascending to the highest abode of Dhamma, look down All-seeing one, upon the people lost in suffering, overcome by birth and decay,

thou who hast freed thyself from suffering' He assured Buddha that, 'there will be they who understand

It was after repeated appeals by Brahma Sampati that Buddha 'looked full of compassion towards sentient beings over the world with the Buddha-eye.' He then declared, 'wide opened is the door of the undying immortals to all who are hearers, let them set forth with faith.'

The decision was thus taken after a long argument when compassion for suffering humanity prevailed and Buddha went forth first to Isipattana to start delivering the message

Chapter XI

THE FIRST SERMON AT SARNATH

Buddha's *Sambodhi* and his great decision to deliver his message to the world have some broader aspects which are worth noting. It is now admitted by all scholars that, of the many early founders of religion, he was most rational and he exhorted his followers to be rational, dependent upon their own inner light (*atma-deepo bhava*, be a light unto yourselves) and to do what their conscience directed them to do He arrogated to himself no authority except that of rationalism based on his own observation and experience It is interesting to know, however, as to what was the ultimate source on which he himself relied and from which he drew his inspiration as well as his moral and spiritual strength. Was it only reason and logic? Was it his logic that attracted innumerable disciples to him or was it something else? The answer is plain and simple It was not only logic or something of that kind that worked the miracle It was evidently his attainment of *Sambodhi*, the experience of experiences, the indelible vision of light that dispelled once for all his delusions and doubts, laid at rest intellection itself and illumined for ever his consciousness with ineffable light and joy beyond description It is these that gave him unlimited moral strength It was not merely an intellectual conviction which ends with a *Q. E D.*, that was the ultimate sanction. It was an overwhelming experience of being face to face with Reality which suffused his whole being, body, mind and soul That experience was of the nature of an intuitionistic flash and then an abiding light and inspiration When after a beatific vision his consciousness returned to the normal level, he decided to convey to humanity his faith that it was possible for every individual soul to rise

to the level of *Sambodhi* and *Nirvana*, provided that the aspirant followed the discipline of the Aryan eightfold path, the Middle Way.

The decision taken by Buddha led him to think as to who should be the chosen people to whom he should go first and deliver the message. There was a time when in the fullness of early aspirations, he questioned himself as to what purpose he should bend all his energies, what goal he should pursue and to what 'god' he should give his 'offerings' ('*Kasmai devaya havisha vidhema*'). But now after *Sambodhi* the question was, to whom should he communicate the secret of spiritual success and of highest attainment. Just as a spiritual aspirant is eager beyond measure to attain the highest, personalities like Buddha who have attained the highest, are equally eager to communicate the secret of the path and the joy of having found the path to proper and receptive persons At times a man of fulfilment is compared to a cow full of milk seeking its calf to feed it. Such was the experience of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in recent times.

Samadhi and *Sambodhi*, though they are different stages in spiritual attainment, as already indicated before, the individuals attaining these stages do not and need not leave the body and pass into Eternity. After a time, they become conscious of their body and their environment but with a difference. There is a radical change in their being and personality *Samadhi* and *Sambodhi* are stages of consciousness in which the individual is lost in the Universal. The link between them in that condition is the closest possible, for an embodied being. It is the come-back that establishes again the earlier relationship between the conscious soul and the body It is like the return of a person to one's own house after a long or short absence. At the same time it is like the coming back of a person who has become the

conscious master of himself. The body, the mind, the education that one had, the thoughts and feelings which one entertained, the associations and in fact everything that formed the personality of the particular individual are all there. It was natural, therefore, that after *Sambodhi*, Buddha began to think of those five Bhikku associates whom he had left behind before he proceeded to Uruvela for his final *sadhana*

He turned his steps, therefore, to Isipattana or Sarnath which was the place of their former parting. There was a park there which was called Mrigavana, the deer park He did not know how he would be received by his old friends But he seems to have anticipated a good reception. The Bhikkus, however, when they saw him and recognized him as their sixth associate who had deserted them, were surprised at his return Their minds went back to the day about six years ago, when they parted They had given him up for lost They had imagined that he was weary of following the hard path of severe austerities which they were all following together, and that he was trying to seek a softer course and an easier life Such were the thoughts which were uppermost in their minds when they sighted him on his return to Sarnath They first decided to neglect him and ignore his presence But as he approached they began to figure out his dignified personality and his face When they saw the calmness and the resignation writ large in his eyes they rallied unconsciously to honour him as they would have honoured any great man coming to them as a guest When he began to speak to them about his Enlightenment and the new way that he had found, they were quite sceptic in the beginning Their smiles betrayed signs of an ironical feeling But as he unfolded the 'middle path' he had discovered, and the more they listened to him, the more they felt that the dark curtain from their own

inner eye was being removed and that they saw for the first time some fresh light

This first preaching is called the *Dharma Chakra Pravartana* the turning of the wheel of religion. This was the beginning of Buddha's ministry. He was glad to note that the scales of scepticism fell away from the eyes of the Bhikkus to whom he was opening his heart for the first time This turning of the wheel, this ministry of his, lasted not only till his death, through all the ups and downs that befell him during his long life of eighty years, but it was carried on by his disciples century after century It was this first push that created the momentum which still continues The wheel of religion of Buddhism still turns and turns continuously Many are the countries and millions are the followers today of Buddhism which took birth on the day of the first sermon to Kondanna and his four companions at Sarnath

There are some very interesting details in the Pali Canons regarding Buddha's going to Sarnath and his first sermon there In *Ariyapariyesanasutta* of *Majjhimanikaya* (i 167), there is mention of Upaka, an Ajivika, ascetic whom Buddha met while on his way from Uruvela to Isipattana Upaka was struck by the personality of Buddha and inquired as to who was his teacher. Buddha told him that his knowledge was self-earned and that he was an Arhat, a *sammasambuddha* (perfectly enlightened), who had won complete tranquillity and *Nirvana*. Upaka then passed by saying, it might be so Buddha thereafter proceeded towards Isipattana.

Mahavagga mentions that before Buddha opened his heart to the five Bhikkus at Sarnath, he had thought of delivering the message to Alar as he thought that Alar was clever wise and learned, and that his mind had been darkened scarcely by any dust, and that 'he would readily

understand the Dhamma But he was told that Alar had already passed away. Buddha then thought of Uddaka Ramaputta also But he too had passed away Hearing this, Buddha exclaimed 'Highly noble was Ramaputta. If he had heard my doctrine, he would readily have understood it'

It was after this disappointment that Buddha decided to preach to the five monks. He spoke to himself saying, 'the five monks have done many services to me, they attended on me during the time of my ascetic discipline. What if I were to preach the Dhamma first to the five monks?'

What was taught as the first sermon, the Four Truths have remained the foundation and the fundamental thought of Buddhism throughout the ages, changes and interpretations notwithstanding

Briefly stated, the four truths are .—

Life is full of suffering (*dukkha*), craving, desire, (*trishna*) is the cause of suffering, the cause of suffering can be destroyed by destroying desire and when the cause is destroyed, the effect also disappears; and finally, the middle path consisting of the eight right disciplines or *sadhanas* is capable of destroying the cause of suffering. The eight disciplines are, (*a*) right view, (*b*) right intention, (*c*) right speech, (*d*) right action, (*e*) right livelihood, (*f*) right effort, (*g*) right mindfulness, and (*h*) right concentration.

The five monks headed by Kondanna saw Samana Gautama coming to them and they addressed him as friend. *Mahavagga* has the following conversation between Buddha and the five Bhikkus as regards the gospel. It is very important and basic from the point of view of the teaching of Buddha.

When addressed as 'friend,' Buddha said, "Do not address, monks, the Tathagata (one who has known the

Truth) by his name and with the appellation 'friend'. The Tathagata, monks, is the holy, perfect, ever enlightened one (*sammasambuddha*) Give ear, oh, monks. The immortal (*amrita*) has been won by me: I will teach you; to you I preach the Dhamma Do you walk in the way I show you, and you will live ere long, even in this life, having fully known yourselves, having seen face to face that incomparable goal of the holy life, for the sake of which people rightly give up the world and go forth into the houseless state"

Then Buddha addressed the five monks and they fixed their mind on the knowledge imparted to them and they were ultimately convinced

The *Mahavagga* contains the following about the first sermon.

And the Blessed One thus addressed the five monks

"There are two extremes, monks, which he who has given up the world, ought to avoid

What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasures, devoted to pleasures and lusts; this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless

And a life given to mortifications; this is painful, ignoble, and profitless

By avoiding these two extremes, monks, the Tathagata has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to *Sambodhi* (Supreme Enlightenment), to *Nibbana*

Which monks is this Middle Path the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to *Sambodhi*, to *Nibbana*?

It is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right means

of livelihood, right endeavour right mindfulness, right meditation

This, monks, is the Middle Path, the knowledge of which the Tathagata has gained, which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to the perfect enlightenment, to *Nibbana*

This, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering, birth is suffering, decay is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, presence of objects we hate, is suffering, separation from objects we love, is suffering, not to obtain what we desire, is suffering.

In brief, the five aggregates which spring from grasping, they are painful

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the origin of Suffering, verily it originates in that craving, which causes the renewal of becomings, is accompanied by sensual delight, and seeks satisfaction now here, now there, that is to say, craving for pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for not becoming

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Cessation of Suffering Verily, it is passionlessness, cessation without remainder of this very craving, the laying aside of, the giving up, the being free from, the harbouring no longer of, this craving

This, monks, is the Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the Cessation of Suffering Verily, it is this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right means of livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness and right meditation

This is the Noble Truth concerning Suffering, thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding,

wisdom, intuition. This Noble Truth concerning Suffering must be understood: thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and intuition. This Noble Truth concerning Suffering, I have understood. Thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and intuition.

This is the Noble Truth concerning the Origin of Suffering, thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intuition. This Noble Truth concerning the Cause of Suffering must be abandoned... has been abandoned by me. Thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and intuition.

This is the Noble Truth concerning the Cessation of Suffering, thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intuition.

This Noble Truth concerning the Cessation of Suffering must be seen face to face... has been seen by me face to face; thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intuition.

This is the Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the cessation of suffering; thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intuition. This Noble Truth concerning the Path which leads to the cessation of suffering must be realized... has been realized by me; thus, monks, in things which formerly had not been heard of, have I obtained insight, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intuition.

As long, monks, as I did not possess with perfect purity this true knowledge and insight into these four Noble Truths, with its three modifications and its twelve constituent parts, so long, monks, I knew that I had not yet obtained the highest absolute enlightenment in the world of men and gods, in Mara's and in Brahma's world, among all beings samanas, and Brahmans. gods and men

But since I possessed. monks, with perfect purity this true knowledge and insight into these four Noble Truths, with its three modifications and its twelve constituent parts, then I knew. monks, that I had obtained the highest. universal enlightenment in the world of men and gods

And this knowledge and insight arose in my mind "The emancipation of my mind cannot be shaken, this is my last birth, now shall I not be born again "

Thus the Blessed One spoke The five monks were delighted, and they rejoiced at the words of the Blessed One And when this exposition was propounded, the venerable Kondanna obtained the pure and spotless Dhamma-eye (that is to say, the following knowledge), 'Whatsoever is an arising thing, all that is a ceasing thing.'

And as the Blessed One had set going the wheel of the Dhamma, the earth-inhabiting gods shouted "Truly the Blessed One has set going at Varanasi, in the deer park Isipatana, the wheel of the Dhamma, which may be opposed neither by a samana nor by a Brahman, neither by a *deva*, nor by Mara, nor by Brahma nor by any being in the world."

Then Kondanna, having understood the Dhamma, said to Buddha, 'Lord, let me become a recluse under the Blessed One, let me receive ordination ' To this the Tathagata said, 'come monk, well-taught is the Dhamma;

lead a holy life for the sake of the complete ending of suffering'. Then Kondanna was ordained and was given the name of Annatakondanna (Kondanna who has perceived the doctrine). So were the other four companions Bhikkhus, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanama and Assaji.

This was the first round of regular ordination in the ministry of Buddha.

CHAPTER XII

THE TEACHING AND ITS SPECIAL FEATURES

BUDDHA began *Dharma Chakra Pravartana*,—the propagation of his gospel—at Sarnath and continued to preach till the end of his life. We have now to see the main content of his preaching

His gospel is variously described as *Madhya* or *Madhyama Marga*, that is, the Middle Path, *Arya Ashtangika Marga*, that is, the Aryan eightfold path, and also simply as Dharma, that is the religion of religions The term Dhamma does not need any explanation. It is the Pali form of the Sanskrit word 'Dharma' that is, the Law of Being, the true religion

The expression *Madhya Marga* signified the avoidance of extremes and the choice of the golden mean Buddha in his younger days, loved luxury, rolled on a bed of roses and went through, almost without break, a round of activities which catered to every sense-craving. But he had failed to find either peace or joy in that continuous revelry of sensual life Sometimes the excess caused pain, and surfeit itself gave rise to disgust He abandoned this way of life for the pursuit of 'pleasure without pain' and 'joy without suffering' At the instance of some teachers, he took to the path of severe austerities and mortification of the body, which may be said to embody the many insatiable hungers of the senses He recoiled from those austerities too as futile and leading to barrenness rather than to the inner sanctuary of infinite calm and happiness Turning away from these two extremes, he took to the middle path which tries to attain tranquillity and the balance of mind It is by maintaining this equilibrium that man can attain the health, both of body and of mind In fact. Rajayoga

emphasises this line of *sadhana*. The following verse of the *Gita* embodies the principle of this *Madhyama Marga* —

> The yogic sadhana or discipline of the yogi dispels all sorrow and suffering when his food, play and other activities are proper and balanced and when he keeps the balance between the hours of sleep and waking.

Buddha's gospel acquired the name of Aryan Eightfold Path because Buddha was always particular in emphasising that it was an Aryan path, a path worthy of the Aryans, of the noble people of Bharatvarsha. To him who has realised that the world is full of suffering, that the cause of all suffering is one's own desire or craving and that this cause can be removed, Buddha prescribes eight steps to achieve the end. It is therefore called an eightfold path

Buddha approached the problem of life in a realistic and rational manner. In spite of the pleasures and joys that man enjoys in his life, Buddha saw that suffering dominated the scene and overwhelmed man He thought, therefore, that his main aim should be to see that all suffering disappeared, so that man may be free from it. He believed in the law of causation. If something exists, there must be a cause for it. There can never be any effect without a cause, nor any cause without its effect. This chain of cause and effect, however invisible at times, is unbreakable. This, in fact, is the law which keeps the Cosmos eternally going He set about, therefore, to find out the cause of suffering He traced it to what is called *Trishna* in Sanskrit and *tanha* in Pali. This word also means thirst. In fact, all desire is a thirst, it is a feeling of want, it points to an urgent need, it is a hankering after some kind of fulfilment Buddha thought that so long as there was a trace of any kind of thirst in the mind of man, the result would be suffering Even if a certain thirst is fulfilled, he saw that that the fulfilment was temporary and the thirst was recurring.

He also saw that with each fulfilment, the thirst increased and the man hankered after a greater fulfilment. Every fulfilment, in its own turn, became the cause of the intensification of the thirst concerned. The man who desires, who has thirst for any the smallest thing, is like a drug-addict whose craving increases with the quantity consumed. It came to this therefore, that the fulfilment was not a real fulfilment at all. This experience and the inexorable logic of cause and effect behind that experience, ultimately led Buddha to the conclusion that if one was to be free from suffering, he ought to eliminate and annihilate *trishna* (desire in every form and shape) from his mind. The end of *Trishna* is the end of suffering and the dawn of *Nirvana*, the joy that knows no want and has no feeling of any need. He also believed that there must be a way for putting an end to this *Trishna* in one's own mind, and that way he found out and called it the eightfold Aryan Path.

In brief, it was this teaching that Buddha conveyed to the Bhikkus at Sarnath. When he saw that by and by they were impressed by the new path, he was further encouraged to continue his preaching. Then followed the gathering of followers, the ordaining of monks, and later inclusion even of women among them, and then the incessant flow of teaching which continued like the broadening and deepening stream of his own life.

Pain, suffering, sorrow, misery and other variants of physical mental, moral and spiritual suffering constitute a fact of experience. According to Buddha, life is full of it, in fact it consists predominently of suffering alone. The question may be asked as to what of the joy which we actually experience in life. To that Buddha would reply, all joy is apparent, fleeting and transitory. Behind every pleasure and joy that seems to make us happy for the time being is the fear that it may end and be lost, that one may

not get it again. If and when lost, all joy leaves behind not only sorrow but also frustration. Thus, ultimately even joy is but the womb of sorrow.

Buddha says that this pain or suffering is repeated in life after life. Rebirth or cycle of births which was the current belief of the times, was always taken for granted by Buddha. That cycle goes on without a stop unless a man frees himself from it by putting an end to the cause of its beginning. Going from one birth to another is like going from one chamber of sorrow to another. This chain of suffering and sorrow is continuous. Its beginning is not known but its end is known and is vouchsafed when there is *Nirvana*. There is no escape from it except by eliminating the cause and cutting the link namely, desire.

Now, sorrow and suffering are things which one would try by all possible means to avoid. There is a natural inclination in man to avoid or overcome all pain, sorrow and suffering. This is an inborn tendency in every living creature. The human body, for instance, wants to avoid illness and keep up an equilibrium which is called health. In fact, pleasure and pain (*sukh-dukh*) have both been described in Sanskrit as *vedana* or sensations. Pleasure is a sensation which is desirable, which one looks forward to, which one attempts to have and continue to possess. As opposed to pleasure, pain is a sensation which one would like to avoid, one which is undesirable. Buddha's whole attempt, therefore, is to see that the sensation called pain or suffering or sorrow, is put an end to. But at the same time, he interprets the other sensation (pleasure) too as leading ultimately to suffering and therefore he advises us that we should escape from this duality of pleasure and pain, of joy and suffering and from both these sensations. A man would then attain a poise which is unaffected by either the one or the other of these sensations. What remains after

the elimination of both these sensations is abiding peace, uncaused joy, eternal happiness, equipoise or *Nirvana*.

Once it is decided that all pain and sorrow have to be put an end to, it is necessary to find out the best way to do it. Sorrow is the result of some cause The law of causation is inexorable, according to Buddha. There is no independent origination as such and everything is bound by the law of causation It is, as it were, a circular movement and one cannot find out as to which is the beginning and which is the end. There is nothing like the first cause, moreover, it cannot be traced even if one were to attempt to find it It is more practical and rational, therefore, to start with things that exist and try to end a state of things that is undesirable from every point of view Sorrow and suffering are facts of universal experience and one must try to end the same as quickly as possible

Buddha proceeds to seek the cause of sorrow and he comes to the conclusion that desire is the root of all sorrow. He does not probe too much into the metaphysics of sorrow. As a practical man he approaches the problem of sorrow in a logical, scientific and rational way. He comes to the conclusion that if there is no desire of any kind and if a man welcomes everything as if it were a decree of fate without any reaction of welcoming or rejecting, of calling it good or evil, then all sorrow would cease. He knows that it is difficult to eliminate sorrow, but at the same time he emphasises that there is no other way. The result could cease only when the cause ceases. Liberation from desire, therefore, is liberation from sorrow, from the cycle of birth and death, and that is *Nirvana*

Thus, suffering sorrow, overwhelming sorrow is a fact of experience, and the cause of it is desire Buddha declares on the strength of his own experience and his *Sambodhi* that it is possible to end this desire It is more or less an

act of faith tested by reason, an act of determined will and it is by such determination that a seeker after *Nirvana* has to endeavour to the end of his life. Buddha argued and claimed that he had himself been able to eliminate desire from his own mind and it was thus that he had attained enlightenment. What he could do, everyone else should be able to do, if he were as determined as he himself was. Personally it was a fact of his inner experience which was abiding. But, those who were sceptic about putting an end to desire, could study Buddha's *sadhana* and see for themselves whether they were able to eliminate desire and to attain an unparallelled equipoise of mind. Of course, the attainment of each individual would depend upon the extent to which he was able to eliminate desire, the cause of all sorrow.

There is no doubt that Buddha's approach was pragmatic and practical He appealed to everyone's everyday experience. But he might have come across people who said that life was not all sorrow, and that there was joy enough. If there was difference in this fundamental approach and premise, he could only say to them that they could go their own way till they realised through experience that life was really full of sorrow. Once it was decided that life was full of sorrow, that its cause was desire, that desire could be eliminated from one's mind, it was necessary to find a discipline to attain that end. Normally speaking, desire is the uppermost thing in one's mind. That desire might be for this, that or the other thing. In fact, Buddha went to the extent of saying that one should be free even from the desire to be free from desire, because even that would bring sorrow in its train!

The discipline prescribed by Buddha is what is called the Eightfold Path, namely, right view (*samyak-darshan*) etc. He called it also the Middle Path The word *samyak*

in Sanskrit means 'right', as also it means 'proper' We have seen that Buddha had by experience come to the conclusion that neither self-indulgence, as when he was a prince, nor self-mortification, as when he practised very severe austerities, was helpful in maintaining the equipoise, the equilibrium, or that state of mind which remained undisturbed by pain or pleasure, by the desirable or the undesirable, by heat or cold In fact, the state of mind which he most valued was on par with what the *Gita* describes as *samya*, equipoise. The *Gita* describes Brahma as *Nirdosha*, that is, without any blemish, and *sama*, that is the state of equilibrium There are numerous passages in the *Gita* which give importance to the equipoise of the mind. The Pancha Sheelas, namely non-killing, non-stealing, abstinence from lying, non-possession and *brahmacharya*, which Buddha prescribed for the monks were, of course, a part of the discipline which is comprised in the *Arya Ashtangika-Marga*, the Eightfold Aryan Path

The core and the essence of Buddha's teaching has always been what he preached at Sarnath as the first sermon But he clarified and amplified the same in the course of his ministry and evolved a complete code of conduct and a comprehensive system of *sadhana* for his followers Various / were the occasions and numerous the opportunities when he taught the gospel through aphorisms, maxims, cryptic sayings, long exhortations, discussions, logical expositions, parables and so on The time, circumstances and persons present conditioned the form and shape which his teaching took. The Sarnath Sermon, however, was considered quite complete and adequate for the purpose of leading the followers to the highest goal For instance, on listening to the Sermon, Kondanna the leader of the five Bhikkus at Mrigavana, became 'Anattakondanna,' that is, 'Kondanna who had gone beyond the self-conceit of self' The *Anatta-*

lakhanna Sutta states that the five monks, after hearing the discourse of Buddha at Sarnath, 'were delighted, and rejoiced at the words of the Blessed One. And when this doctrine had been propounded, the minds of the five monks became free from attachment to the world, and were released from the cankers' Thus at that time, 'there were six Arhants (persons who had reached absolute holiness) in the world'. This means that the Sarnath Sermon was self-sufficient and wholly adequate

It is possible here to give a few examples as to how Buddha suited the form of his teaching to the occasion and the person or persons concerned, and went on expounding and expanding till it developed into a sufficiently formidable body of teaching, full of details

The story of preaching to Yasa, a rich clansman of Varanasi who went to Isipattana to Buddha, is interesting in a number of ways The reason for his renunciation was somewhat similar to that of Buddha His father was the first who swore by the triple pledge of 'taking refuge' in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. His wife and mother were the first lay women disciples whom Buddha accepted and who 'took refuge'

Yasa was a rich young man living in luxury and surrounded by dancing women. One night he rose early when he saw his female attendants lying about half-naked in disgusting postures, with saliva running down their lower cheeks, and many of them muttering in strange voices in their dreams Yasa exclaimed, 'Alas, what distress, alas, what danger,' and slipped away from his father's house and went to Isipattana. Buddha welcomed him and assured him saying, 'here is no danger, here is no distress. Come here, sit down, I shall teach you Dhamma' Then he preached to him about morals, about sinfulness of desires and abandonment of desires When Yasa was fully impre-

ssed Buddha taught him the original doctrine, namely, the fact of suffering, its cause. its cessation and the eightfold path. Then the Dhamma-eye of Yasa opened and he realised that, 'whatever is an arising thing, that is a ceasing thing.'

When the father of Yasa saw that his son was missing from home, he went in search after him and saw Buddha who had taught his son The result was, 'he saw the Dhamma, mastered it, penetrated it, overcame all uncertainty, had full knowledge without any dependence on anybody'. He exclaimed 'Glorious, Lord, glorious . Your word is like a lamp brought in darkness. You have preached Dhamma in many ways I 'take refuge' Lord, in the Blessed One, in the Dhamma, and in the fraternity of monks.' His mind then became free from attachment to the world and was released from the cankers The mother and wife of Yasa were given advice by Buddha and they too 'took refuge' in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha

Then there is the famous story of Kassapa brothers. Once when Buddha wandered away from Isipattana, he went to Uruvela The three famous Kassapa brothers, Uruvela Kassapa, Nadi Kassapa (living on the bank of the river) and Gaya Kassapa who were *jatilas* (ascetics who maintained matted hair) lived in different places performing very often big sacrifices They attracted very large crowds and had hundreds of retainers in their respective *ashrams* Buddha went to all of them one by one and was able to convert them all proving the futility of sacrifices as means for salvation. When once convinced, the three Kassapas and hundreds of their disciples 'flung their hair, their braids, their provisions for sacrifice, their *agnihotra* (sacrificial fire) into the river and went to Buddha for 'taking refuge' in him '

Buddha preached to them in terms of fire and sacrifice. He said· 'everything is burning. The mind is burning with

lust, with hatred, with delusion, life itself is burning with birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, dejection, despair and suffering. One should train his consciousness to turn away from the senses and their objects, whether they are pleasant or painful for the time being Then only can man divest himself of passion and be liberated.' The Kassapa brothers and their followers became free from attachment to the world and were released from cankers.

Apart from the hundreds of disciples that lived with them, there were myriads of Brahmins and householders who were their followers. They doubted if Uruvela Kassapa was really a convert to Buddha's teaching Therefore they asked him, 'what have you seen and learnt, so that you abandoned the fire and the sacrifice as well?' The reply of Kassapa is significant. He replied, 'It is sights, sounds, tastes, women and fulfilment of sense desires that sacrifices promise, because I came to the conclusion that these are perishable and lead to rebirth, I took no more delight in offerings and sacrifices' The followers then asked him again as to what was it in which he found delight now To this Kassapa replied, 'I have realised that state of mind which does not cling to sensual desires, which is no hindrance to natural joy, which does not change and which is not liable to stray Therefore, I do not any longer take delight in sacrifices' He then told them that Buddha alone was his teacher and his refuge. They all went to Buddha and he taught them and they got the Dhamma-eye

Buddha's advice to Bimbisara is well-known From Uruvela, Buddha is said to have gone to Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha There, Seniya Bimbisara, the king, bowed to Buddha, who had promised to meet him after he had *Sambodhi*. Buddha taught him the Dhamma. The king wanted Buddha to stay near about. His considerations while trying to find a proper place for Buddha are very

interesting He says: 'Where may I find a place for the Blessed One to live in, not too far from the village and not too near, suitable for going and coming, easily accessible for people who keep on seeking him, by day not too crowded, where there is little sound, little noise by night, sequestered, hidden from men, well-fitted for a retired life?' He then donated the Venuvana (forest of bamboos) as a garden for the fraternity of monks

Buddha accepted the same which was a gift, the first of its kind He then remarked, 'I allow you, monks, to receive the donation of a park' This was the prelude to the numerous gifts of parks and gardens which Buddha and his disciples received from his admirers and devotees The most important however were the Amravana at Rajagriha by Jeevaka, the physician, the Jethvana at Shravasti by Anathapindika, the wealthy merchant, and the mango-grove at Vaishali by Amrapali, the beautiful courtesan '

From the point of view of finding out the most essential part of the teaching of Buddha, the story of Sariputta and Moggalana is very helpful They were two very learned and devoted Brahmin friends who went forth in search of truth and promised each other that he who finds the truth first would seek out the other and impart it to him Sariputta was the first to learn the truth from Assaji, a disciple of Buddha Sariputta then found out Moggalana and taught him what he had learnt from Assaji The essence of the teaching was, 'whatsoever is an arising thing, all that is a ceasing thing' Sariputta characterises this essence thus:—'Even if this alone be the Dhamma, you have indeed seen the sorrowless way, lost sight of and passed over for many myriads of aeons' These two converts proved to be the most important disciples of Buddha. —as Buddha had foretold that they would be

From the above examples one can see that the basic

teaching and the essence of it has been always the same and that was the Sermon at Sarnath, delivered to Kondanna and his companions.

If we analyse all the teachings of Buddha, we find that out of the four truths, three are for understanding through experience and reasoning the reality of things and only the fourth is the operative part, that is, the discipline or actual *Sadhana*, for realising and attaining *Nirvana.* The four truths may be repeated here :—(*a*) suffering (or *Dukkha*, sometimes called pain, evil, ill and so on) is a fact, (*b*) desire (or *trishna*, sometimes called craving, yearning and so on) is the cause of suffering, (*c*) suffering, which is an effect, ceases when the cause, desire, ceases; and (*d*) desire can be made to cease and it does cease by following the eightfold path (right view etc.)

The *Rathavinita Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikaya* (i 146) explains the ascent of the mind of an aspirant in a very interesting way. Attainment of *Nirvana*, which is independent of everything else, is the goal. But how do we go there? The aspirant begins with purity of morals; that is the means for purity of mind. But purity of mind is but a means for attaining purity of views. But such purity of views is a step towards dispelling all doubts. Only the disappearance of doubts can lead us to pure knowledge and insight into what is right and what is wrong, that is, into the Path. It is such insight into the right Path that takes one to *Nirvana.*

Once an aspirant for perfection is convinced that the four noble truths enunciated by Buddha are true to his own experience and reasoning, his duty is to follow the Buddha Marg or the eightfold path.

The eightfold path is calculated to lead the disciple to *Nirvana.* It consists mainly of moral discipline and training, concentration of mind on *Nirvana* and detachment

from senses and self, and practices which lead to full knowledge (*prajna*) It is necessary to give here some details of the eightfold path What is this eightfold path of 'right view', 'right intention' and so on?

The *Samyutta nikaya* (V 8) explains the eight items of the path (*a*) Right view is the full, clear and definite knowledge as well as experience of suffering, as the main fact of life, of desire as the cause of suffering, of the fact of cessation of suffering with the cessation of desire, and of the discipline that leads to the cessation of desire (*b*) Right intention is the intention to renounce, the intention not to injure or hurt any life whatsoever (*c*) Right speech means and includes refraining from false, harsh and frivolous speech at any time and under any circumstances (*d*) Right action is abstinence from killing or injury, from taking what is not given, and from sexual thoughts and intercourse (*e*) Right livelihood means abstinence from being a burden to others and living without exploitation of others (*f*) Right effort means the constant physical and mental efforts to see that no bad or evil thoughts enter the mind, that all confused and muddled thoughts are removed, and that only good and noble thoughts fill and develop in the mind. (*g*) Right mindfulness means mental alertness and constant endeavour to destroy all longing for the body, the senses, and the world (*h*) Right concentration is fourfold and leads to four stages of trance In the first stage, the mind is secluded and is free from passions and evil thoughts but is full of joy and pleasure accompanied by reasoning and investigation In the second stage, there is internal serenity and the mind is fixed on a single point It is full of the joy of concentration, but it is free from any reasoning or investigation In the third stage, the mind dwells with equanimity and is mindful and happy It is self-possessed It is in a state where intellect becomes dormant. In

path and believed that experience would persuade men ultimately to follow his path rather than the habitual routine of rituals

(*c*) He could see the significance of ethics and moral conduct in contributing to the perfect and continuous peace of mind at which he aimed For instance, 'hate' was not something to be eschewed for its own sake but because it disturbed one s mind Whether hate was good or bad, whether any other feelings and urges in the mind were good or bad, was to be judged from the extent of disturbance or otherwise that they created in the mind

(*d*) He discouraged all metaphysical discussions and baseless speculations which were not founded on actual experience He gave the famous illustration of a man suffering from head-ache He said that no amount of discussion as regards head-ache was of any use to the sufferer. What was required was an immediate remedy Man is subject to suffering, and that suffering has to be put an end to. No amount of discussion or meditation on the theoretical or metaphysical causes of suffering would avail in the matter of putting an end to suffering It cannot be inferred that he had no ideas at all about various metaphysical speculations But he did not want to encourage any discussions about them which would waste one's time in arid dialectics He wanted to avoid mere intellectual acrobatism. He was more realistic in tackling the problem of sorrow as it was, and as it affected man in daily life

(*e*) He cut across all the differences and the ideas of high and low as between castes and creeds, and welcomed everyone into his fold This kind of equality in spiritual matters was rare in those days In the case of Buddha, it naturally followed on account of his rationalistic approach This was one of the reasons why people thought that there

Chapter XIII

MINISTRY AND ORGANISATION

In the history of religions, very few prophets of new faiths had such a long span of time for developing and elaborating their teaching and for their ministry Buddha attained enlightenment as early as his thirty-fifth year and began his ministry immediately He lived up to the ripe old age of eighty years Thus, he had a period of forty-five years in which to give full shape to his gospel and preach it to the people His contemporary, Mahavir, also was a long-lived prophet and he is said to have died only about ten years earlier than Buddha But Buddha had some distinct advantages and helpful circumstances in his favour. There was already an atmosphere of protest against the ritualistic part of Vedic culture Mahavir's cult of the *Nirgranthas* was as old as two and half centuries, while that of Buddha was quite fresh and had a far greater personal appeal His Middle Path struck people as more practical and rational. It was easier to follow as it did not prescribe severe austerities. Moreover, Buddha himself came from a very noble Kshatriya family, which gave him a high social status That too was very helpful. The two successive Magadhan kings, Bimbisara and Ajatashatru of Rajagriha, proved extremely favourable to him The Lichchavis of Vaishali, a powerful and influential republican clan, were enamoured of his teachings, his saintly character and his occult powers. Added to all this was his attractive personality and his personal history which was one of renunciation, of continued *sadhana* and of blameless behaviour. He preached in the simple homely Magadhi language of the people and in parables which went home Constant touch with the daily life of the people, and conversation and

group discussions with them gave him the necessary opportunity to evolve an all-sided body of teaching which became very popular and was universal in its appeal

After Enlightenment, Buddha did not allow much time to pass before he started his preaching. He believed in converting as many people as possible and ordaining monks in large numbers. Since Buddha used Socratic methods in preaching and always resorted to persuasion alone in converting others to his way of thought he was never fanatical He was liberal and tolerant and even in prescribing a code of discipline for the monks, he saw to it that it was far more easy than in the case, for instance, of the Jains Being convinced that too hard a life and physical rigour were not congenial for promoting equilibrium of mind, his discipline even for ordained monks naturally lacked the mortifying and suppressive harshness which was obvious in the other schools of thought usually followed by the Shramanas.

The procedure for renunciation by the monks and their ordaining was in the beginning quite simple, though later the rules became stricter. and none were ordained except by a meeting of elderly monks of at least ten years standing No women were admitted at the outset; and it was only on the insistence of Anand and Mahaprajapati, his mother's sister, that he agreed to ordain women and start nunneries Buddha expressed his apprehensions in this connection and said that the admission of women would shorten the life-span of the faith Experience and history alone can say if Buddha's apprehensions were correct. However, from the point of view of women and their progress, one important cause of inferiority complex was removed, and women even in his days began to feel that in the spiritual field, they were looked upon as equally qualified with men to take to the life of the Bhikkus and reach the highest spiritual goal.

When the number of converts swelled and became larger and larger and somewhat unmanageable, the question of a better and a more elaborate organisation naturally arose Buddha was very familiar with the democratic system and the political administration of the republics of those days. He himself came from the Shakya clan, which was one of the republican clans He had also great admiration for the Vijji republic, for the Lichchavis and their system of government The latter were obviously the most numerous as well as the most powerful of the Vijji Confederacy, which consisted of eight republics His religious organisation therefore was modelled on the republican pattern which he admired Rules of assembly, rules for conduct of meetings, protocol, voting by ballot and all such elaborate rules and procedure were systematically observed in the holding of meetings, of deliberations and in the running of the monasteries which were founded in large numbers

In contrast with this systematic way of organising a religious order, the Brahmins of the day did not seem to have had any very elaborate organisational set-up. There were no doubt, priests and learned men of the type of the Kassapa brothers who were individually very powerful and popular. They had a large number of followers too But all that had not yet been reduced to a system of a co-ordinated and a wide-spread organisation The same may be said to be the case with Mahavir and his propagation of Jainism Mahavir was not liberal to the same extent that Buddha was and he made it a rule that 'once a Jain, always a Jain.' A Jain convert had to foreswear allegiance and patronage both to his former religion and also to any other than the one he had adopted Brahmins had another handicap. They were, according to tradition, against total renunciation of life None of the Vedic riks, for instance, speak of *sannyasa* as a way of life. It was only later in Upanishadic times

that *sannyasa* as such began to be appreciated, and this institution developed still later in the Smriti period, perhaps partly as a result of Buddhist influence, into the fourth and last *ashram* of every man's life.

Buddha did not try in the beginning to cut the monks adrift from society or to make his religious organisation a separate entity altogether in the community That is why he allowed newly ordained monks to have links with their families, and there were cases where they were allowed to keep in contact with their former wives by sending gifts and such other tokens of affection. Nor did he try to carry on a campaign against the institution of Chaityas. In fact, he once advised the Lichchavis to continue to visit and worship them As regards the laity, there was not much of strictness at all in the new faith. All that they were asked to do was to take the triple vow of paying homage to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha A large number of people who embraced this new faith continued their old religious allegiances except Vedic rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies. Gradually, a link was established between the monks and the laity, and the monks began to visit the families of Buddhists for blessing people on such auspicious occasions as birth, christening and marriage. They were called *mangala* (auspicious) ceremonies.

By keeping monks and their organisations a bit apart but not cut off from the laity, and by charging them with the duty of maintaining the faith, Buddha could gradually enhance the prestige of the monks beyond description But this method had a weakness too When the monks and their institutions later came to be destroyed during the Muslim period, Buddhism was left without leadership and without substantial support fróm the laity. This mistake was not committed by Mahavir. He saw to it that, in addition to ordaining monks and giving them a strict code of conduct,

the lay followers also were obliged to take vows, though they were a little less strict than those administered to the monks Thus, the whole Jain philosophy and its code of conduct was as much applicable to the laity as to the monks. The monks were only one step ahead of the laity in that they were far stricter and their code far fuller This brought about a closer integration between the laity and the monks, as also a feeling of responsibility among the laity which induced them to make efforts for the maintenance of the new religion

It is obvious that though Buddha could gather vast numbers and also organise monks and monasteries on a very big scale, some basic structural defects remained which ultimately proved to be the causes of Buddhist decline in India

Let us now see what the texts have to say about the system of ordaining, the main elements of discipline, the extent of the ministry and the general form of the Buddhist organisation.

It may be remembered that the sight of the ascetic was the fourth and the last thing that gave Prince Gautama the clue for renouncing the world, in order to conquer suffering His first instinct was to renounce there and then, to shave off and put off the royal robes and go away. Buddha adopted a similar uniform, shaving etc., for the newly ordained monks.

In the *Anattalakshana Sutta* we find him giving permission to monks, to ordain other monks When he saw that the process of bringing the aspirants for ordination to himself was tiresome to all and that the number of aspirants seeking ordination increased manifold, he said, "I grant you, monks, this permission Confer henceforth, in the different regions and the different countries, both modes of ordination monks and laity yourselves, on those who desire to receive them. And you ought, monks, confer them in this

way. Let him who desires to be ordained, first have his hair and beard cut off, let him put on yellow robes, adjust his upper robe so as to cover one shoulder, bow down to the feet of the monks and sit down squatting, then let him raise his joined hands and let him declare thrice as follows: —'I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the Dhamma. I take refuge in the Sangha'.

"I prescribe, Oh Monks, that the world be renounced by the aspirants and ordination given by the thrice-repeated declaration of taking refuge".

This is *Upasampada*, the essence of the ordination ceremony, for details one may refer to *Upasampada-Kammawaca*.

Buddha's famous exhortation to monks whom he sent out for preaching the Dhamma is worth quoting here.—

"I am free from all fetters, human and divine; you, monks, also are free from all fetters, human and divine. Go ye now, monks, and wander forth preaching, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit of all and for the happiness of all, for the good of men and gods. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach monks, the Dhamma, which is good and lovely in the beginning, in the middle and in the end, in spirit and in letter; proclaim a full, perfect and pure life of holiness There are beings whose mental eyes are covered scarcely by any dust; but if the Dhamma is not preached to them they cannot attain salvation. They may fall if they do not hear the Doctrine It is they who will understand the Dhamma. I will now go to Uruvela, to Senani-town (Rajagriha) in order to preach the Dhamma."

Buddha's ministry, which began at Sarnath, proceeded apace till it spread through him and his numerous disciples throughout Magadha, Kosala, Vaishali and other adjacent parts

The code of conduct for the monks, which was ultimately evolved after long experience is very elaborate and every monk is supposed to follow the discipline scrupulously. We learn from *Mahavagga* of Vinaya (1.55-56), that these simple rules were prescribed for the novices "I enjoin, monks. ten rules of training for novices—(*i*) Refraining from taking life, (*ii*) refraining from taking what is not given, (*iii*) refraining from incontinence, (*iv*) refraining from falsehood, (*v*) refraining from drink and intoxicants, (*vi*) refraining from taking untimely food (from noon to next morning), (*vii*) refraining from dancing, singing etc, (*viii*) refraining from the use of garlands, perfumes, adornments etc, (*ix*) refraining from the use of a luxury bed, and (*x*) refraining from accepting gold or silver I enjoin on the novices, Monks, these ten rules of training." The *Anguttara Nikaya* (iv 248) repeats in great detail these rules, which are also applicable to laymen who propose to observe the discipline of fasting

A word about ordaining women is necessary here It is well-known that Buddha was reluctant in the beginning, but the persistence of Mahaprajapati, his foster mother and the persuasion of Anand, ultimately succeeded Vinaya, *Chullavagga* (x 1). states that when Buddha finally decided to initiate Mahaprajapati, he said to Anand. 'If, Anand, Mahaprajapati Gotami will take upon herself the duty of following eight strict rules, let this be her ordination.' He then laid down eight rules. He said that a nun, however old, ought to stand up and greet a monk and salute him, she ought to enquire of a monk about *Upasatta* and have monks for giving exhortations No nun shall rebuke a monk, and so on

Even after all these rules were accepted by Mahaprajapati, Buddha exclaimed that his doctrine would now last only five hundred years instead of a thousand, just

as a field with diseased sugarcane could not last long.

It is for historians to say whether Buddha's apprehensions came true.

Buddha was quite clear about one thing and that was, it was not easy for one who dwells in a house (that is a householder) to practise a perfectly complete and pure religious life polished as a pearl. It was only after renunciation that one could follow the precepts (called *pratimoksha*) and then exercise restraints and guard and control the senses. That would lead to equanimity and contentment. Such equanimity of mind helps concentration of mind on higher existence, beyond senses and beyond pleasure and pain. That gives the Dhamma-eye and the vision of truth and *Nirvana*.

In the *Mahaparinirvana Sutta*, Buddha is found stressing another equally important point, when speaking to Anand. He says, "And whosoever, Anand, either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves, and a refuge unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge but holding fast to the Dhamma as their lamp, and holding fast as their refuge to the Dhamma, shall look not for a refuge to any one but themselves, it is they, Anand, among my Bhikkus, who shall reach the very topmost height, whoever of them are anxious to learn."

In the social organisation of Buddha, the householders and the laity were a class by themselves. They had to follow a certain general discipline. But it was the ordained monks and nuns who were the mainstay of Buddhism.

The system of occasional meetings of monks and religious people was already in vogue among Brahmins and other schools of thought of those days. Buddha prescribed, according to Vinaya, *Mahavagga* (II 3), the *Upasatta*, that is, a fortnightly meeting of monks, at which *pratimoksha* (precepts) was recited. Each monk was required to confess

his lapses from the precepts. The system of private confessions also came into vogue since the *Upasatta* was held only fortnightly Buddha also laid down rules as regards stay (*vassa*), food, clothing and so on Monasteries (*viharas*) sprang up in places where land and buildings were donated by rich people, these *viharas* later developed into very important educational institutions. It has already been noted that Buddha adopted, for the Assembly of Monks, the rules of procedure of meetings etc , followed by the republics of those days Buddha left behind him a somewhat original but rational doctrine, based on his inner experience and *Sambodhi*, a large number of followers from all strata of society, an order of monks and nuns, with a clear and strict code of conduct; and a vast organisation of missionaries, full of inspiration, fired with the zeal for conversion and sustained by the steady glow of compassion to relieve humanity and living beings from all suffering and misery.

All this blossomed into Buddhism, which in the fulness of time, spread to the four corners of Asia.

Chapter XIV

FROM SARNATH TO KUSINARA

The teaching of the Doctrine, the *Dharmachakra*, the wheel of religion which Buddha set in motion at Isipattana, continued to turn during his whole life without any stint, break or rest till he entered into *Nirvana* at Kusinara at the age of eighty The teaching issued from him like sparkling water from a living mountain stream. It radiated like light from a brilliant flame, with ease and without effort, dispelling all darkness and illuminating whatever came in the way The momentum that Buddha gave to the wheel at the Deer Grove was so tremendous that it has kept on as vigorously as before for two millenniums, not only in one place and one country but in a dozen countries and in myriad places Turning the innumerable vertical barrels in Chinese Buddhistic temples which the monks and the visiting devotees keep doing are symbolic of the vigour, variety and continuity of the preaching of the teachings of Buddha.

In spite of the many schisms that threatened to disrupt Buddhism, unaffected by the many conflicting interpretations and commentaries which followed, and irrespective of the many schools of thought and sects that are prevalent even today, all Buddhists in the world accept and respect the Tripitakas as the main body of teaching It is universally admitted that the foundation of the Tripitakas is in Buddha's teaching at Isipattana The Aryan Eightfold Path revealed in his first sermon is the basis of all subsequent teaching All that Buddha taught later was either a clarification, amplification or explanation of his fundamental tenets. As he went on teaching people of different types and of varying capacity, he had to modify his exposition and use a language which suited the motley audience It

may be said that the Aryan Eightfold Path is in the nature of Sutras and all else that followed is but the commentary. The parables which Buddha used were for simplifying the teaching

Viewed from this distance of time, Buddha's teaching was very revolutionary in character, though it was neither exotic nor foreign to the soil Apart from his new insight, he emphasised certain principles and aspects which were in the Indian tradition but which were overgrown by accretions and meaningless verbiage. He appealed to reason and to experience and led people by the hand step by step instead of ushering his doctrines as something wholly new and against the then current religious thought He truly turned the light inward and his exhortation to his followers 'to be lights unto themselves' was not merely rhetorical His simple but practical approach, his persuasive methods, his reliance on experience, his avoidance of mere harangue against evils and other schools, and his emphasis on a positive moral law helped him to bring about a silent and unobtrusive change in the minds of men

All the years of his life, between his first visit to Varanasi for the inauguration of his glorious mission and his last visit to Kusinagar or Kusinara, may be said to have been spent mostly in Magadha parts of Mithila and in Kosala His visits to other places were very casual and perhaps on special invitation A few such important places may be mentioned here with their context

Buddha visited Kapilavastu, the capital of the Shakyas and the town in which his father Shuddhodana, his aunt and foster-mother Mahaprajapati, and his child Rahula lived. There are fascinating stories about this visit of his to his native place He had gone forth from 'a house to a houseless life' in search of peace He returned for a while to his home town as a mendicant donning the yellow robes of a

monk and with his inseparable begging bowl. A painting at Ajanta immortalises this situation in which young Rahula is led by a queen, to offer alms to the royal beggar. During this visit, while his father's grief knew no bounds, his foster-mother insisted on herself being ordained. This request was not immediately conceded but later, women were allowed to join the ranks. When his son was prompted to demand his inheritance from his father, all that the saint offered to the young prince was a place in the army of religious beggars that followed him!

Among the places in Magadha, the one most associated with Buddha is Rajagriha, modern Rajgir. It was the former capital of the Magadhan kings before they built Pataliputra and later moved thither for greater safety. Rajgir is today a small township but stands in a very picturesque setting with a ring of hills fortified by cyclopean walls here and there and running about twenty-eight miles all round the sheltered valley. In the valley is a small hillock known as Gridhrakuta (Vulture Peak). This peak is regarded as most sacred by Buddhist pilgrims on account of the long stay that Buddha made there and the teaching that he gave to his followers in that place. It was on that hill that king Bimbisara, and then his son Ajatashatru, used to spend hours with Buddha. There were possibly one or two cave-like shelters on the hill; but now there remains only one like a partial cave. On account of some unrecorded act of nature, a big boulder covering one of the caves has rolled away. Even so, this hill has more obvious and surer landmarks of Buddha's stay there than other places which have now been identified as his haunts Three other important spots in Rajagriha may be noted, namely the Tapoda (hot-springs) in which he used to bathe while staying in Venuvana; the Venuvana itself which was donated by king Bimbisara and which, in fact, was the site of the earliest of Buddha's monas-

teries, and an 'Amravana' (mango grove) which was given to him by the famous royal physician, Jeevaka, for building a monastery. It is only last year or so that the site of this Amravana has been identified. Here lie the foundations of a monastery of those days There are distinct marks of the ground-plan of the oldest residential building of those times in those parts or anywhere else in India, so far as the Buddhist period of history is concerned.

Pataliputra (modern Patna) also is one of the important places associated with the name of Buddha. But it was then a new town called Pataligrama It later became the capital of the vast Magadha empire under the Nandas and the Mauryas. Buddha had blessed Pataliputra but had predicted that it would be subject to ravages by fire, pestilence, famine and water, and would be torn by internecine quarrels.

Next in importance to places in Magadha are places in Vaishali and Kosala Vaishali, the federal metropolis of the Vijjian republics as well as the capital of the powerful Lichchavis, was a city loved by Buddha. On a special invitation by the citizens during a pestilence Buddha visited it, and as a result, the city became free from the epidemic. He is said to have visited it often. On the occasion of his last visit, when asked for a gift, he is reported to have given away his begging bowl to the Lichchavis. The scene of the famous story of the complete self-surrender to Buddha of Amrapali, the richest, the loveliest and the most coveted courtesan of the place, lay in the extensive gardens on the outskirts of Vaishali In the face of advice to the contrary by many jealous citizens of the place, Buddha accepted her invitation to visit her garden and as a result she gifted away to him everything that belonged to her. Vaishali is also known otherwise as the birth-place of Mahavir

life were filled with a number of varied activities which resulted in a revolution of thought and action among those in the midst of whom he lived and moved This revolution gradually spread far and wide in a peaceful way till it reached half of the Asian continent He had his difficulties as well as obstructions, because he had to contend against vested interests, against a powerful priesthood and against long and established traditions. He had his own enemies and persecutors—and Devadatta, his near relative and the son of Godhi, was a typical example He had also almost daily wordy duels, controversies, questions and answers as well as discussions He had brilliant successes too, such as securing the support of kings like Bimbisara and Ajatashatru, conversion of the Kassapa brothers, the change of mind of Amrapali and Angulimala Some miracles also are attributed to him A number of them can be explained as being due to his pure character and personal magnetism and some were obviously the result of his occult powers But whatever else might be happening or not happening, the one thing that Buddha pursued throughout his life was preaching and teaching the new way to every one that seemed capable of understanding and following. His exhortation to monks was unmistakable. Theirs was to be a continuous life of wandering and preaching as mendicants, except during the three monsoon months, when travelling was very difficult. At the very beginning of his ministry, after converting and ordaining sixty monks at Varanasi, Buddha exhorted them to go out for preaching His charge to them was typical, and has been already quoted elsewhere

When one reviews the ministry of Buddha, one is struck by the developing process that operated through the forty-five years of Buddha's active life. That process evolved a complete body of teaching, a regularly ordained body of

monks, an exhaustive and detailed code of discipline and conduct, a number of monasteries as centres of study and propagation, and a vast laity which had accepted his doctrine. The fact that within six months of Buddha's passing away, a council of about 700 monks met at the Saptaparni cave in Rajagriha to co-ordinate and collate his teaching shows that the teaching was widespread and that there was a strong desire among his followers to study and co-ordinate.

It is interesting to note that during Buddha's long ministry there were many strange situations and a variety of opportunities which created occasions for him to give rulings on many a knotty problem The *Vinayapitaka*, for instance, narrates the story of the ordination of Rahula, the son of Buddha, by Sariputta, on the occasion of Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu after his *Sambodhi*. Rahula was too young and yet he was ordained under orders from Buddha. But when Shuddhodana, the child's grandfather, complained that it was cruelty to parents to ordain young children without the consent of the parents, Buddha declared · 'Let no minor son, Oh monks, receive ordination without his father's and mother's permission '

On another occasion, according to *Vinayapitaka*, monks who took a vow of silence lest they quarrelled among themselves, were rebuked by Buddha when they visited him at Shravasti He said, ' . Indeed, monks, these foolish men who profess to have kept 'retreat' (*vassa*) well, have kept it like a herd of cattle, like a herd of rams, like a company of indolent people ' Then he prescribed that, during retreat they should choose the eldest and the most learned of them and request him to hold discourse (*pavarana*) about their conduct and atone for lapses, if any.

When similar occasions arose, and there were a number of them, he gave his rulings which later formed parts of

the monks' code of conduct A monk, for instance, was to be careful to see that he ate no meat or flesh, which he had reason to believe was brought for him or prepared for him. In the 7th *Khandaka* of *Chullavagga* of *Vinaya*, Buddha allows monks to 'eat fish that is pure in three points: to wit, that the eater has not seen, or heard, or suspected that it has been caught for that purpose.' A monk was not to accept invitations for dinner or lunch from the laity except very rarely or periodically Such injunctions on the part of Buddha show how practical he was and how he tried to avoid any privileged class from springing up in the order of monks. If acceptance of invitations was allowed indiscriminately, it was only a select few who would receive invitations, while the commonalty of monks would go without them and be jealous

It is true that the geographical region in which Buddha worked and spread his gospel was not very vast in area At the most it comprised two and a half districts on the southern bank of the Ganga, and about three districts to the north of the river. The population of this region in those days might have hardly been between two and three millions But it is obvious that the work of spreading the gospel was intensive during his life-time since it acquired the potentiality of covering the whole of India within the next two centuries By the time of Asoka (third century B.C), we may imagine that news of this new Dharma had reached almost all the important cities and towns of India The Pali canon gives ample evidence of large-scale conversions also. If Kondanna and his four associates at Sarnath were the first converts, they were soon followed by rich clansmen like Yasa and his parents, by the numerous followers of the famous Kassapa brothers, by Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, by wealthy merchants like Anathapindika of Shravasti, and by the vigorous republican citizens

of Vaishali By the time of his death the Mallas also had fallen in line

Munificent gifts of land mango-groves, estates and so on for the benefit of monks and the location of monasteries poured in, the first such gift to Buddha being Veluvana or Venuvana, by no less a personage than Bimbisara, the king of Magadha Buddha allowed other monks also to receive land-gifts for *viharas*, *varshavasas* (monsoon retreat) and such other purposes for the maintenance and spread of Dharma.

All this and more did not, however, mean that there was no opposition or obstacle in the way of Buddha and the propagation of Dharma Apart from other things, the wicked intentions and acts of Devadatta, the brother of Ananda, were typical of what jealousy could do *Chullavagga* (Vinaya) mentions that Devadatta thought, 'it is I who ought to lead the Bhikku Sangha ' He made bold to propose to Buddha, while the latter was preaching Dharma in Magadha, in the presence of Ajatashatru. 'Let the Blessed One give up the Bhikku Sangha to me, I will be its leader.' Buddha refused to give up even in favour of his favourite disciples Sariputta and Moggalana; much less would he do so in favour of Devadatta, 'the vile spittle-dribbler'. At this, malice entered the mind of Devadatta and he went to the extent of employing an assassin to kill Buddha But it happened that the assassin was himself converted by the calm and perceiving Buddha Frustrated by the failure of his attempt, Devadatta tried to kill Buddha all by himself by rolling down a big stone on him as he climbed the Gridhrakuta Buddha was only slightly injured and he knew who had done the deed Then Devadatta who had failed in violent attempts tried to sow seeds of dissension in the Sangha But all his attempts to discredit Buddha failed miserably

Buddha took this occasion to diagnose the mind of people like Devadatta He said, 'Devadatta's mind is taken up by evil conditions He is overcome, his mind is obsessed, by gain, by want of gain, by fame, by want of fame, by honour, by want of honour, by his having wicked desires, and by his having wicked friends'

In contrast to this kind of mind, Buddha stated that the right type of man, to be an emissary of religion, 'must be able to hear and make others listen, able to learn, able to bear in mind, able to discern, and to make others discern, skilful in dealing with friends and foes and no maker of quarrels'

Buddha embodied all these virtues in himelf in the highest degree He had always respect for opponents as well as for opposite views He was no doubt against the accretions in the Vedic school of thought and action, he repudiated sacrifices based on the fulfilment of desires, he was against privileges of birth and caste, but at the same time, he had great admiration for Aryan culture, for real Brahmanism which represents virtue and wisdom, for all that was good and great in other schools of thought. He was a quiet thinker, a persuasive speaker and a zealous missionary He laid store by inner purification, psychological transformation and spiritual realisation To that extent he repudiated mere external and ceremonial ways of *sadhana* which were current in those days, such as bathing in rivers, sacrifices, rites and rituals

His discussions regarding the essence of Brahmanism and as to whom to call a Brahmin, with Sonadanda (Sonadandasutta, *Dighanikaya*, i 119) and his definition of a true Brahmin (*Dhammapada* 396-423) are very interesting Sonadanda in reply to a question by Buddha as to who was called a Brahmin, said, that five things, namely, birth, being a teacher of Vedas fairness of colour, possession of

virtue, and learning with wisdom were necessary for being called a Brahmin. Buddha argued out the first three characteristics and made him accept the decision that for being called a Brahmin it is enough if one were virtuous and wise! Thus, birth by Brahmin parents, Vedic learning, etc. were not a necessity! Then Buddha proved that the characteristics of a true Brahmin are also the characteristics of a true Buddhist! One who is unattached, undisturbed, without hate or hypocrisy, without injury to living creatures, with deep wisdom, with purity and with virtue, without falsehood, without lust and craving, is a Brahmin and a Buddhist as well.

This and many other similar passages show the grasp of fundamentals which Buddha had and how he always laid his finger on the essentials without any predilection or prejudice for names and forms and notions.

CHAPTER XV

MAHAPARINIRVANA

THE vicissitudes of age began to tell on the powerful frame of Buddha, which in the beginning had experienced princely luxuries and dissipation but which had been later inured to every kind of hardship for a number of years During the days of ministry it may be said, that inspite of great strain and stress he exercised great self-control and lived a very balanced life No one among human beings, however illustrious and great he may have been, has been able to put off indefinitely either old age or death. There are, no doubt, certain stories which speak of people living for hundreds of years, but there is no clear and believable evidence to that effect The longest that people seem to have lived is about 150 or a few years more. It can be imagined that by living in a very scientific way and by alternating active life with hybernation, it may be possible to prolong life, but not to cheat death. Even so, Buddha lived to the ripe age of eighty, which is ten years more than the biblical 'three score and ten.'

Long before his death, Buddha saw his cult becoming very popular and spreading far and wide This heartened him and he became more and more confident as well as highly conscious of his great mission and its future. A time came, however, when he began to feel that his days were numbered. It was then that he prepared himself for the inevitable He is said to have spoken to Ananda, his nearest disciple, about this matter. It is reported that the immediate cause of his brief illness was due to eating some food offered to him by Chunda, which was not easily digestible. After suffering some pain in the stomach he recovered and went to Kusinara.

In the case of great yogis and saints, it is often believed that they do not leave their bodies in the usual way. Since they are supposed to know beforehand that the moment of death is coming, they prepare themselves for it and adopt an attitude of calm resignation. It is also possible that some pass away while in *samadhi*. In the case of Buddha, the phenomenon of his passing away is called *Mahaparinirvana*, which means the great entry into *Nirvana*, that is, final extinction or dissolution of all that is perishable. It is laid down by Buddha himself that desire is the cause of living, when desire ceases, life also ceases and nothing remains after *Nirvana*. No entity or centre of consciousness is supposed to be living in any shape or form after one enters *Nirvana*. It is obvious that this passing away of Buddha was the calm and quiet slipping away of a great soul from out of the physical body which was no longer capable of holding it or of being useful to it.

There is a great difference between what is called *Mahasamadhi* of Hindu Yogis and *Nirvana* of Buddha and Buddhist saints. In the case of Hindus, the soul of the Yogis who have attained salvation is believed to be continuing even after the death of the physical body. In fact, with the death of the physical body, the soul of the *muktas* or freed ones, enters on its immortal career which is full of unadulterated joy and bliss. That is the ineffable state of consciousness in which the perfected soul lives eternally. According to the belief of the Buddhists, however, the soul, which is but a bundle of urges and desires, continues to pass from birth to birth till such time as every desire and urge is eliminated completely. The cessation of all desires means also the cessation of the entity or the individual soul. Nothing therefore remains after *Nirvana*. The body naturally decays and dissolves, and its constituents are mixed with the natural elements. The soul which was formed

on account of desires and which was, ere long, full of desires, ceases to exist after the complete annihilation or disappearance of every desire

It may be very interesting to study the *Mahaparinirvana* of Buddha along with the passing away of Mahavir, Zarathustra, Jesus, Shankara, the Sufi saints, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji Obviously, it is not possible to do so here In this respect, we suffer from a great handicap, because the actual circumstances of the passing away of many of these great souls are not fully available. We can enter this field only if we have sufficient and reliable data and material Yet it is quite an inviting study to speculate about the condition of the souls of great men at the exact point of departure from the body and thereafter. If fruitful, such a study would shed more light on the personality and the psyche of the respective individuals

In *Samyutta Nikaya* (III) we find the simplest definition of *Nirvana* given by Buddha. He says to Radha (in Shravasti) who had been questioning him, 'Verily Radha, the destruction of craving is *Nibbana*' When asked by Radha as to what is 'being', he gives the classic comparison of children building sand-castles on the beach He says, 'that desire, Radha, that lust, that lure, that craving which is concerned with the body, entangled thereby, along with feeling, perception, activities and consciousness, is the cause of one called a being' He adds, just as children build sand-castles and they are attached to them, but destroy them as soon as they cease to have desire and craving for them, 'even so, Radha, do you scatter the body and its consciousness as soon as you are rid of lust or affection for body, feeling, perception and all activities'

The next question that arises is, what happens to the individual consciousness which is called 'a being' or a soul. In *Sutta Nipata* (1069-76), Buddha's answer to this

important question is given. Upaseeva, the Sakya, is the questioner. He asks, 'where and on what support rests the soul of one who had ceased to desire and crave?' Buddha exhorts him to be mindful and alert in attaining the state of nothingness (*soonya*). He adds, 'As a flame blown out by the wind, disappears and cannot be named, even so the recluse when released from name and body on account of destruction of desire, disappears and cannot be named. No measuring of him is possible, whereby one might know of him that he is not; when all qualities are removed, all modes of speech are removed also.'

In *Udana Sutta* (VIII. 1-4) there is a beautiful passage which describes the state of being without pain, the state of *Nirvana*. Buddha while in Jethvana said: 'there is, monks, the stage where there is neither earth nor water nor fire nor wind, nor the stage of the infinity of space, nor the infinity of consciousness, nor the stage of nothingness, nor the stage of either consciousness or non-consciousness; neither this world nor the other world nor sun nor moon. There, monks, I say there is neither coming nor going nor staying nor passing away nor rising. Without support or going on or basis, is it (that condition). This indeed is the end of pain, the state of *Nirvana*.'

Buddha argued that because 'there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an uncompounded, there is an escape from the born, the become, the made and the compounded.' That 'unborn and unmade' is the state of *Nirvana*. It is tantamount to salvation, redemption, release, *moksha*, and such other state or states of being, described by different systems of religion and thought as the final stage and goal of all beings. According to Buddha, this can be attained by the destruction or cessation of craving; and because it is also the culmination of mystic meditation and experience, it is the acme of bliss and beatitude.

Mahaparinirvana Sutta in *Digha Nikaya*, is the main source of an account of the last few months of Buddha's life Buddha started for the north from Rajagriha for the last time on the eve of his final departure from the earth He went to Vaishali and spent the rainy season there Before leaving that favourite resort of his, he summed up his teachings and prophesied that he would depart in three months' time. The Pali version and the Sanskrit version (*Divyavadana*) substantially agree with each other and there is essential identity in the teaching of both versions After summarising his teachings to the assembly of monks at Vaishali, he said, 'come now monks, transient are compound things, strive with earnestness In no long time will take place the Tathagata's attaining *Nirvana*—at the end of three months from now.' After alms and the midday meal, Buddha had a last look at Vaishali when he said to Anand, 'this Ananda, is the Tathagata's last sight of Vaishali Come, let us go to Bhandagrama '

Then from there, Buddha proceeded to Kusinara after crossing the river Hiranyavati. At Kusinara he encamped in the exercise ground of the Mallas and asked Ananda to prepare a bed for him in these words . 'come, Ananda, prepare for me between the twin Sal trees a bed with its head to the north I am sick, Ananda; I shall lie down ' (*Mahaparinirvana Sutta, Digha Nikaya* ii, 137).

Even while lying ill, Buddha was not weary of teaching his doctrine. A wandering ascetic called Subhadda visited Kusinara the night before the death of Buddha He insisted on seeing Buddha Anand who was in constant attendance refused audience to Subhadda But Subhadda was insistent because he had heard that Buddha was to attain *Nirvana* in the last watch of the night that day. Buddha overheard the conversation of both and he said to Anand, 'Enough Anand, do not prevent Subhadda Let Subhadda

have permission to see the Tathagata. Whatever Subhadda would ask me, all that he may ask, if he is intent on knowledge and not on annoyance; and whatever I shall explain when asked about it, that he shall soon understand.' Then Subhadda was admitted to his presence and on his understanding the doctrine, was ordained Subhaddha was the last disciple of Buddha, just as Upaka whom he met on his way to Sarnath after *Sambodhi* was the first.

It is said that earlier, on account of some indigestible food served to him at Pawa by Chundaka, a blacksmith, Buddha got ill, though he succeeded in digesting it. The whole story is told in *Mahaparinirvana Suttanta* (part XVI of *Digha Nikaya*). After eating the truffles prepared and served very reverently by Chunda, Buddha addressed him as follows. 'Whatever truffles, Chunda, are left over to thee, those bury in a hole I see no one who can digest that food, save a Tathagata.' In fact, as a consequence, Buddha suffered from severe dysentry. But he bore it all without complaint and overcame the illness. Then he went to Kusinara.

As the last days approached, Buddha told Ananda that he was feeling the weight of years and that his body was like a worn out cart. He said, 'It is only when the Tathagata, by ceasing to attend to any outward things, becomes plunged by the cessation of any separate sensation in that concentration of heart which is concerned with no material object, it is only then that the body of the Tathagata is at ease' This indicates that Buddha was becoming increasingly absorbed in the inner spirit.

At last, when the last day dawned, a bed between two Sal trees was spread by Anand according to Buddha's instructions and the trees showered flowers out of season on him as he lay there. Buddha was all along 'mindful, calm and self-possessed' even to the last moment. 'Impermanent are all component things. To realise this and

to live without any craving is the goal of life, strive earnestly', might be said to be his last refrain It is recorded that Buddha in one of his discourses pointed out to Anand, that the place of his birth, the place of his Enlightenment, the place of his first sermon and the place of his passing away would be considered sacred and be visited by pilgrims with feelings of reverence. Asoka is said to have taken the hint from this exhortation of Buddha as regards the most important places of Buddhist pilgrimage, namely Lumbini gardens, Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Kusinara

The last moment of Buddha when his breath passed away was full of ecstasy and spiritual rapture and it left a gentle but ineffable smile on his motionless lips He then attained *Parinirvana*, a state beyond suffering, beyond pain, beyond desire, beyond the consciousness of both sensation and ideas. When the news was known, there was great lamentation on all sides. But those who had imbibed his teaching kept calm and composed Others were exhorted not to lament and were reminded of the doctrine of Buddha.

Next morning, Anand formally announced to the Mallas the great passing away and asked them to do what was fit for the occasion After expressions of heavy sorrow, all honoured his mortal remains and his relics were distributed to the Magadha king, the Lichchavis, the Sakyas, the Bulis, the Kiloyas, Vethadeepaka the Brahmin, the Mallas of Pawa, the Mallas of Kusinara, Dona the Brahmin, and the Moriyas of Pipphavana. There were in all eight stupas erected over the remains and one each on the vessel and the embers.

While the mortal remains of the best of the best of men were thus disposed of, the teachings of the Great Teacher have made their immortal home in the heart of the human race, which still responds to the mission of compassion, peace and brotherhood.

Chapter XVI

BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM AFTER MAHAPARINIRVANA

There are a number of sculptures and also paintings which portray the *Mahaparinirvana* of Buddha. His passing away plunged 'the whole of creation' into sorrow. It is no wonder that this great event became a very popular subject for artists. No details, however, are available about the posture and so on at the time of his death except those provided in the *Mahaparinirvana Sutta* and later portrayed by sculpture. The portrayal is always of a face which has half-shut eyes, is perfectly calm and is lit up by a slight smile. Most probably, his body was cremated and the relics were shared as already noted in the last chapter. It is believed traditionally that Asoka got the relics and the ashes distributed throughout India at eightyfour thousand places and in each place a stupa was built.

His teachings had not been written down during his life-time but were preserved orally by fellow monks. There seems to have been no unanimity among his followers about the authenticity and the completeness of the teachings he had left in the form of memorized aphorisms. That was the reason why the first Council met at Saptaparni Cave at Rajagriha within six months of his passing away. It is traditionally believed that the second Council was held at Vaishali after about a hundred years of his passing away. There was a third Council, which was the most important one. It met in the ninth or tenth year of Asoka's enthronement It was on that occasion that Asoka took a very definite and bold stand, and after deciding about the authenticity of a certain body of teaching, he banished from the

Sangha all those who did not believe in it This was in the nature of a purge. Many of the dissenters who did not agree to go away were driven out

The body of teaching finalized in this Council or Synod has been handed down to posterity as the final one. It is that which is now the standard and authorised version of the Gospel.

The basic teachings are contained in the *Tripitakas* or 'three baskets' or three boxes Their names and general contents are as follows —

I *Sutta-Pitaka* consists of *suttas* or discourses in five collections or *Nikayas* —

(1) *Digha-nikaya* has long discourses on the disciple's training, on his career, on caste, on the Vedas, on Buddha's last days, on Buddha's qualities, on the perfect teacher, on the laymen's duties and so on.

(2) *Majjhima-nikaya* consists of medium-sized discourses on a number of legends, on Buddha's *sadhana* and austerities, on his *Sambodhi*, on his differences with Devadatta, on *karma*, on the order of monks, on the Jains, on Buddha's knowledge, on the life to come, on the first sermon and so on.

(3) *Samyutta-nikaya* has discourses which are connected with each other, on the chain of causation, on the formation of the individual self, on heresies, on six senses, on the eightfold path and so on.

(4) *Anguttara-nikaya*, which is in eleven divisions, treats the subject of qualities, doctrines and so on

(5) *Khuddaka-nikaya* contains some minor subjects such as taking refuge in Dhamma, rules for novices and so on But it also contains the *Dhammapada*, the most famous and popular but

brief and condensed gospel. It is almost a compendium of Buddha's moral teachings. Another important *Sutta* in this collection is *Sutta-nipata* containing an account of Buddha's infancy, his renunciation, his conversation with Bimbisara, his temptation and so on. Many stories of Buddha's life also form part of this *Nikaya*.

II. *Vinaya-Pitaka* is the book of discipline in three sections —

(1) *Sutta-vibhanga* enumerates 227 lapses which are recited at the *Upasatta* (*Uposatha*) or the fortnightly meetings of the monks. There is a similar list for nuns

(2) *Khandaka* has two sub-sections :—

(*a*) *Mahavagga* means the great series. It lays down rules for admission to the order, ordination and so on. There are also rules for the performance of certain ceremonies. Some important legends and events also are given in this *Vagga*.

(*b*) *Chullavagga* deals with the methods of correcting and penalising lapses and offences, enumerates duties of teachers and novices, both male and female.

(3) *Parivara* summarises and classifies rules etc.

III. *Abhidhamma-Pitaka* contains seven sections. (1) *Dhammasangani* consists of enumeration of Dhammas, that is, mental processes and (2) *Vibhanga* further analyses the same. (3) *Dhatukatha* discusses the constituents of man's sense-consciousness. (4) *Puggalapannatti* describes types of individuals in the perspective of their progress along the Path (5) *Kathavathu* consists of discussions in connection with different schools of thought. It is said to have originated at the third Council. (6) *Yamaka* gives a psychological analysis in pairs of questions.

(7) *Patthana* deals with Causality and relations between things

It is quite safe to assume that the three *Pitakas* in the present form were classified and arranged from the mass of memorised teaching that was available at the time of the Third Council (247 B C) during Asoka's reign Since then they have been handed down from generation to generation They hold supreme sway as the authorised version in all countries in which the Pali canon is followed But even in those countries where Mahayana prevails, the *Tripitakas* are recognised as authentic as well as authoritative The Mahayanists differ in emphasis and certain interpretations and not in the matter of recognising the authority of the text of the Pitakas.

In order to understand fully Buddha's own teaching and Buddhism that developed on the strength of that teaching, it is necessary to look upon Buddha as the root or main trunk and different schools of Buddhism as the branches. Buddhism and the different schools of thought developed later. They relied, no doubt, on the basic teaching, but schisms, interpretations, the influence of the surrounding atmosphere in India, and the culture and environment of the people outside India among whom it spread, had their own part to play. It was those things that were the cause of Hinayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, Zen and other forms of Buddhism Buddhism in all its ramifications is not the subject of this book The life and strivings of Buddha, his Enlightenment and the core of his teaching are the main theme here. Before attempting to indicate the main forms Buddha's teaching took later, and after Asoka, we may here deal with the main fabric of thought and sentiment that the followers wove round the personality of Buddha during the few centuries, say three or four, that followed his *Parinirvana*.

There is no photograph or any realistic or detailed description or representation of Buddha available to us The descriptions given in literary works are more or less imaginative and such as were conceived by great poets when Buddha had already become the idol of the people He is portrayed as one perfect with all the thirty-two *lakshanas* or characteristics of a *Mahapurusha* (great person). Miracles, myths and legends had been accumulating round his name. I do not look upon them as meaningless They denote the working of the human mass-mind in the case of personalities whom it looks upon as extraordinary. They indicate also the influence that the particular personality had on the mind of those who clothed him with the trappings of great qualities, real as well as imaginary. Ultimately, all this working of the mind of the people led to his being installed as an *avatara* by the Hindus and as the perfected Buddha by the Buddhists. His portraiture in sculpture and painting in the respective periods is based on this process that was going on in the minds of the poets, thinkers and artists of the time

Max Muller has called this whole process as the 'dialogic process' already referred to and described in this book elsewhere.

It may be interesting to know something of the spread of Buddha's teaching during the period between *Mahaparinirvana* and the reign of Asoka (about 483 B C , to 256 B C). Not many details are available Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka's grand-father, was not an admirer of Buddha There is no evidence to show that he was against him either How far and in what way Buddha's teaching spread in India and abroad during that period would be a very interesting study But it seems certain that by the time of Asoka, it had made definite progress and it had secured a hold on the mind of the people Among large sections of the people,

it had taken the place of the heavy, ritualistic, priest-ridden and complicated orthodox religion

Asoka's conversion came in the tenth year of his reig Till then he was as orthodox a Kshatriya as anybody els His was a real conversion and he was extremely earnes about it, as is evidenced by his own edicts as well as hi generous actions There was thereafter a complete chang in his personal life. It was the positive ethical teaching based on compassion that influenced Asoka more than anything else He became the first great royal missionary and in his hands Buddha's teaching became a princely gospel and Buddhism an aggressively converting religion

It was in Asoka's reign and owing to his efforts that Buddhism spread rapidly in India and in other countries. His becoming a Buddhist counted most with his courtiers and with the vast number of his subjects It is necessary to note here that it was through the instrumentality of the Bhikkus, Viharas, Dharmamahamatras of Asoka and so on that it spread in India Similarly, Asoka took care to send out to foreign countries messengers as well as missionaries who could serve the people selflessly But Buddha's teaching took different shapes and forms in different countries according to the environments and the capacity of the countries concerned

It is difficult to predict the future of Buddhism, but there is enough data to say something about the future of the main teachings of Buddha. His rational approach and ethical doctrines have secured a permanent place in human thought and the gospel of peace and mutual understanding are bound to have greater hold progressively on all thinking minds and consequently influence the future of humanity.

Apart from the teaching of Buddha, his picturesque life-story lingered in the memories of people and they talked about it with increasing interest after his death That story

spread far and wide and travelled to other parts of India and then to other countries Whatever the accretions that gathered later round the story, the core seems to have been authentic as most of the versions current through centuries agree with each other in essentials More important, however, than the story of his life, was the reputation he left behind him about his noble character It is reflected in the discourses and almost in everything that he said and did. He was extremely human, and compassion for suffering was his ruling passion At the same time, he was a good judge of men and had a deep insight into human nature He was extremely courteous in his discussions, patient in opposition and ever active and alert in his mission. His relations with his close followers were of an intimate nature and they were all very much attached to him He was looked upon as the ideal man full of human sympathy and kindness Moreover, his vision of an ideal humanity and his *Sambodhi*, which was the form that mystic realisation took in his case, clothed him with the halo of a prophet. The traditions of Arhathood which were already there in the atmosphere, helped this process

That term, namely Arhat, and everything associated with it, especially perfection of great human qualities got attached to him.

The term 'Buddha' got into the picture later It means one who has known, a man of knowledge, a wise man It is derived from the Sanskrit root '*budh*' to know *Bodhi* is knowledge, Enlightenment. Hence, the Fig Tree under which Gautama saw Light and became a Buddha was called the Bodhi Tree, and the place Bodh Gaya *Sambodhi* means the right knowledge, the fact of being invested with right knowledge, full knowledge, perfect knowledge. *Sambuddha* is one who is the very perfection of the ideal man who has known the Truth by inner experience. *Samma Sambuddha*

is the Supreme Buddha, while *Bodhisattwa* is one who is Buddha in the making, one who would become a Buddha in his future life or lives

This was the background, the atmosphere and the tradition that shaped for a few generations the personality of Buddha whom they knew, recognised and revered as the saviour of mankind, the words that he spoke and the impressions he made upon the minds of his immediate followers formed the core of his teachings and the seed of future Buddhism What he spoke was in Magadhi, the language of the day, current round about in the Magadha country While everything that he spoke must have been valuable, enough which was important, cogent, relevant, logical and easily memorizable was committed to memory and handed down from mouth to mouth without any change This technique is already in the Indian tradition, so much so that the Vedas for the last three thousand years are still being perpetuated in that manner and the technique which has developed is almost a science and an art

It was with regard to this body of Buddha's teaching that had come down to the times of Asoka, an interval of about two hundred and twenty years, that the Great Emperor said, "All that has been spoken by the Lord Buddha has been well-spoken" This tribute paid by one of the greatest rulers of men to one of the greatest teachers of mankind stands engraved for the last two thousand years and more on the Rock Edict 2, known as the Bhabru or Bairat Edict

This does not mean that the whole canonical text which forms the main body of Buddhist Scriptures today was available in the present form to the people in those days In fact, Asoka himself was responsible through the Third Buddhist Council in 247 B C, for systematising the teachings which were available at that time. But it may be very

interesting to know that even before the Third Council met at Pataliputra, many of the edicts of Asoka had already been engraved and they contain references to portions of the Tripitaka as found today. While the entire body of the Canon was transcribed in Pali script in Ceylon about two centuries after the Third Council referred to above, there is clear reference in Asokan edicts to *Angutha*, *Suttanipata*, *Iti-uttaka*, *Majjhima-Nikaya*, *Dighanikaya* and *Patimokka* (part of *Vinaya*). It is obvious therefore that, just as the Sakyan prince evolved into a Buddha by his great and strenuous *sadhana* or spiritual discipline inspired by his intense aspiration to conquer all suffering, the simple words spoken by him out of compassion for suffering humanity and inspired by inner light and experience, crystallised into a body of teaching which served as a nucleus for a fresh faith.

Whatever else may be said of Buddha and Buddhism, they were neither exotic nor foreign to the soil They were of India, and Indian to the core. Buddha might have been a rebel and Buddhism a new revolutionary faith But they cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be said to be non-Indian or un-Indian They cannot be thought of divorced from the Indian background and the Indian climate of those days. They cannot be pulled out of their context and thought of as independent phenomena They would not be understood and could not be explained unless we thought of them in the Indian perspective But Buddha, his teachings and Buddhism have to be considered in the context of Vedic teaching, Upanishadic ferment of free thought, the preference to the life of the spirit as against the indulgence of the senses, belief in the transience of the material world and the permanence of the spirit, the journey of the soul, the belief in the law of Karma and in transmigration, the system of Yoga, the non-Vedic Shramana teachings with

their emphasis on austerities and meditation and so on. There is no doubt that Buddha introduced new thought, new methods of approach and new emphasis on rationalism But to think that he wrote on a clean state or that all was crude and tribal and immature before the advent of Buddha and that Buddha brought first light to India is to do violence to history and to close one's eyes to the process of the evolution of religious thought and life in India

It is admitted on all hands and by all schools and systems of Buddhism that the *Tripitaka*, as available today, constitutes the basic teaching of Buddhism Even the ancient Mahasanghikas, Sarvastivadins, Mahayanists admit the authenticity and authority of the *Pitakas* The thirty-seven constituents of enlightenment mentioned in the *Mahaparinirvana Sutta* in *Dighanikaya* (ii 119) and in *Samyutta* as well as *Vibhanga* may be said to be the universally acknowledged creed of the Buddhists so far as discipline and spiritual evolution is concerned They are designated as *Bodhipakkhikadhamma* They are something like the *padarthas* mentioned by the Samkhya system. The thirty-seven consist of · (*a*) four stations of mindfulness or awareness, (*b*) the four right efforts, (*c*) the four bases of psychic power, (*d*) the five faculties; (*e*) the five powers, (*f*) the seven parts of enlightenment, and (*g*) the noble eightfold path

The Buddhist scriptures represent one of the most early faiths in the world which have a credo, a philosophy, a system of discipline and a history. Though the teaching in the scriptures arose out of Indian conceptions and presuppositions, it makes an appeal to the most modern mind and aims at satisfying its inquiry into religious life and thought. Therefore, it is interesting to note as to how this body of teaching was systematised and how it acquired the authority it did in the course of centuries.

But it is impossible to pursue this inquiry here, nor does it come within the purview of this small attempt. I may state that the need for this kind of approach and thought was so urgent and its vitality so strong that within three centuries of its birth it crystallised into a definite body of teaching through a deliberate attempt of its followers and spread throughout the whole of India. In this context it may be mentioned that the first Council at the Saptaparni cave within about six months of Buddha's passing away (483 B.C) led the way. Then came the second Council during the reign of Kalasoka (383 B C), one hundred years after the first attempt. The third Council, and the most important one, was held in Pataliputra in 247 B C. by Dhammasoka or Asoka Priyadarshin. It was thus that the basic texts of Buddhism took shape and Buddhism found in Asoka its greatest missionary. There was also later a Fourth Council during the Kushan Period.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHA'S TEACHING AND HIS CONTRIBUTION

WHEN we are considering the essence, only the core of the teaching of Buddha that is his without any controversy about it, needs to be taken into account

The facts and experiences of life as they struck Buddha were, that man was suffering everywhere and at all times and stages, and that he was earnestly but helplessly hankering after freedom from this curse of suffering It might be that this suffering is but the result of limitations inherent in human nature or that suffering is but another name for the feeling of want, the feeling that something is lacking for a full and perfect life Even so, the limitations have to go and to that extent Buddha is right when he says that there is a constant struggle to overcome suffering and to conquer it once for all

Buddha has said that *trishna* (तृष्णा) or desire, or the constant sense of want and the wish to fulfil the same, is the root of all suffering In fact, when analysed, desire itself means the consciousness of something wanting, and therefore it is the consciousness of imperfection, which by itself causes suffering. One can say that it is not desire so much as the egoistic attachment to the desire and to the thing desired that is the cause of suffering Even then the first truth which Buddha enunciated, that all life is suffering, remains a fact of experience

Buddha did not like the mind of his disciples to be diverted by discussions regarding first creation, God and other metaphysical questions. He was primarily interested and absorbed more in finding a way out of suffering than in trying to investigate into the etiology of suffering.

In the opinion of some thinkers, Buddha and his teaching may not be giving us all that we want. But the things that he gives in abundance are rational, pragmatic and enough to take us beyond suffering. Buddha's teaching promises to liberate us from suffering, and that promise it fulfils. Buddha says, let us start from where we are. What avails us to ask the question as to why we are here and how we came and whence? It is desire, pain, suffering, misery that make us self-conscious. If we were full and perfect, there would have been no desire and its sequel of suffering. We are conscious of pleasure not in a positive way but by being conscious that we shall be miserable if we lose that pleasure. Thus, all pleasure and happiness are in a way only the negative aspects of pain. We are constantly in dread of losing pleasure. Thus, pleasure is a fleeting moment of unreal relief in the permanent background of the fear of being deprived of it at any moment. The root of all suffering is desire for pleasure, desire for liberation from pain. If we go beyond desire and are neither desirous of pleasure nor desirous of getting rid of pain, we reach a state of equanimity. That is the ideal state and that is *Nirvana.*

But it is not so easy as it seems, to abolish desire of all kinds Even the desire to abolish desire is a desire! Even that has to be abolished if *Nirvana* has to become a reality. One can see easily how difficult this is. Here, it is only concentration on the problem and deep contemplation that is helpful; it is the study of our own consciousness and its laws which can show us the way.

It is a mistake to think that desirelessness is death. Man lives on and does act even after attaining the state of desirelessness That kind of action springs from selfless love, compassion, friendliness. Such action does not disturb perfect equanimity which has to be attained here and now in life and also retained throughout life. Therefore,

a life of discipline in conformity with ethical conduct and a life full of compassion has to be lived, so that equanimity is not lost even for a moment till the end of life. In the case of perfected souls, at the end, there will be complete dissolution of all desires that have been dragging along through former births and the natural result will be the attainment of *Nirvana*.

Buddha and his teaching starts from the data of personal experiences which is available to one and all. Then the cause of all these experiences is traced to desire, which is in a way the root of all experiences also. Desire arises and lives in the consciousness of man. It is sought to be eliminated by the rational method of psychological control or control of the mind Concentration, contemplation and such other yogic practices are helpful in this respect. But this is not enough, since it is not merely a question of a temporary gain, but it is a question of leading the whole life in a manner which prevents desires from raising their heads and disturbing equanimity which is once and again established by practice That end is sought to be gained by a life of piety, of compassion, of right conduct, along with the constant endeavour to keep the mind free from any desire. Ethical life is good and necessary not only by itself but because it helps us in inducing equanimity and maintaining it. Thus, suffering and its root-cause are destroyed and what remains till natural death overtakes the man, is a mind full of compassion and full of a sense of duty towards fellow-beings

Metaphysics and other things are important but to Buddha they were like intellectual luxuries not to be indulged in when the main enemy, namely suffering and its root, desire, were yet to be fought and conquered.

One of the most important things that Buddha did was to throw everyone on his own resources for his own

salvation, for liberating himself from the bondage of the senses, desire and suffering. He exhorted everyone to recognise no other authority except his own experience and his own reason based on that experience. By this, he cut across all the barriers of religious hierarchy, created in every one a self-confidence and a sense of responsibility for solving one's own problem, over-reached all meaningless rites and rituals and converted the problem of salvation into a psychological inner struggle where the higher mind sought to control the lower urges of the senses in order to sublimate the same for attaining a steadier, nobler and a happier state of consciousness.

The secret of the abiding influence of the main teaching of Buddha lies in this, that he first found the enemy who had to be fought, pointed out the enemy, declared that he could be conquered by one's own efforts, showed the way to do so by self-discipline for which no outside help was required and himself led the way by practising all the time what he preached.

Buddha was predominantly a moral genius. According to him, moral conduct with the aim of achieving the good and happiness of mankind was the essence of Dhamma. Compassion (*karuna*) was the source of his morality and good of all (*kalyan*) the goal of his moral conduct. He was a great rationalist and did not want even the humblest of his followers to have blind faith in him and to follow him as an outside authority. He told every one to follow the light that was in himself. He based his teaching on his own experience as interpreted by his rational faculties He himself recognised no authority besides his own conscience or the light of reason. He did not make any mention of intuition or mystic experience as his authority, though that alone in the form of *Sambodhi*, was the ultimate source of his own wisdom. In his eyes, even intuition or mystic

experience, if it is to be of practical use, has to stand the test of the cold light of reason He did not believe in any personal God or power of that kind He did not rely on Vedas, priests or any such authority, nor did he recognise any *guru* as such though he contacted and learnt from many great thinkers and *siddhas* of his time He did not refer too often to any mystic spiritual experience He had, no doubt, *Sambodhi*, Enlightenment, the nature of which has been already indicated But what he emphasised was the clarity of perception of the truth of experience, the inevitable logic of facts and the light of reason These alone, he said, should be our real guides.

It is difficult at this distance of time to estimate fully and truly the real contribution of Buddha to the thought and culture of the times in which he lived Moreover, in the case of ideas and thoughts, they may or may not always influence contemporaries to the extent that one expects. Prophets are often born ahead of their times and are misunderstood in their own days Sometimes they are not at all understood and listened to even by those who are near and dear; but they do influence generations yet unborn and people who might be distant and unknown Even so, a humble attempt may be made here to assess the impression that Buddha and his teaching made on the contemporaries and also on the people far and near who lived in India as well as abroad, in the centuries that followed

Buddha came at a time when certain evils in the traditional religion had grown and become intolerable in the region in which he lived His earnest search after truth and penetrating insight could easily discover that the spirit of religion was at a discount and the form and shell of it predominated He departed therefore from the traditional religion and strove to build new religious loyalties on fresh foundations. He belonged to the line of the

Shramanas instead of the Brahmans He therefore did not rely on the Vedas but on his own insight, experience and reason. He could thus work constructively instead of engaging himself in controversies regarding Vedas, their antiquity and authority, interpretation and so on. He shifted the emphasis regarding religious authority from the Vedas, the priests, traditions, rituals, ceremonies and others to observation, search after truth, experience and rationality. The second important thing that he did with regard to religion was the organisation of a class of Bhikkus entirely devoted to the propagation of Dhamma or religion. This kind of organised propagation of Dhamma was quite a new thing at that time Ordaining, organising ordained Bhikkus, providing them with education and a code of discipline, were all perfected by him during his own life time. He laid down a procedure for ordaining monks and for conversion of the laity to his creed Buddha may be said to have founded the first missionary group, equipped with all the necessary training and means for spreading religion. This naturally involved a methodology. In this field too he may be said to have been an innovator. He used the language of the people for religious teaching. He made religion democratic by doing away with caste-barriers and distinctions based on birth, sex, or age in the matter of initiation. He laid emphasis on good conduct instead of rituals and formalities of religion. The use of dialogues and parables was not new. It could be traced to the Upanishads. But he used them in abundance and with great effect.

He did not encourage metaphysical speculation nor philosophical theories He was against wasting time in intellectual acrobatics. He saw that such things led nowhere. He emphasised ethics based on noble instincts and emotions such as compassion, friendliness and non-

injury This approach shifted the emphasis from theory and tradition in religion to practice of religion in the form of ethical conduct which is, in fact, the most important aspect of all real religions

As destruction of 'desire' (*trishna*) in all forms and shapes was the pivotal point in Buddha's *sadhana,* the deeper study of mind and consciousness became inevitable. The research and study of the laws of mind, thought and reasoning received far greater attention in Buddhism than ever before The study of psychology and logic were encouraged as a consequence, more than philosophical and metaphysical speculation

The destruction of 'desire,' the root of all evil, could not even be attempted without the practice of self-control, and this led to meditation and yoga. The Dhyani (contemplative) Buddha is the most familiar portrayal of Buddha that we come across The battle of Buddha with Mara is nothing but the inner struggle of meditating Buddha with the urges of the senses which are always there lurking in our sub-consciousness

These may be said to be some of the most important items of contribution by Buddha. After Buddha, Buddhism continued to develop along these lines, for a long time. It was only later that certain schools of thought developed in Buddhism which departed from the main line and became credulous, ritualistic and ceremonial.

Buddha was a protestant and a thorough-going one. His departures were fundamental not so much in objectives as in the means and methods that he adopted Many of his ideas were already there. For instance, the attainment of desirelessness was there as an important step that could lead to the highest happiness. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* lays down that it is not merely the knower of the Vedas (*shrotriya*) who attains the highest happiness but he must

have also reached the state of desirelessness (*akama-hata*, unaffected by Kama, that is, desire). But the methods prescribed by him were not wholly traditional ones. His emphasis on moral conduct as a means which led to calmness of mind aimed at rehabilitating ethical standards in the field of religious practice. He was thus able to introduce new values in the field of religion and religious conduct.

The contribution of Buddha, however, is not to be estimated and judged only from what he achieved during his life-time, though that too was considerable and unique. His highly moral personal life and renunciation as well as the impress of his personality soon elevated him to the dimensions of a legendary hero in the field of religion and spirituality. His spiritual attainments ultimately raised him to the pedestal of an *avatar*, an incarnation of God Vishnu. The mighty wave of missionary zeal which sprang from his compassion for all suffering, spread far and wide till it overflowed and touched the borders of the continent of Asia. It was the inspiration of Buddha that gave us Asoka and all that he means for the history of India and for humanity. In spite of modern scientific advance and scant reverence for religion and religious persons as such, which seem to be characteristic of this century, Buddha, his rational approach, his moral emphasis and his psychological discipline still hold the ground and attract the attention of great thinkers and leaders of thought all over the world.

APPENDIX I

HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

This small book on Buddha and his teachings would not be complete without a study of the main differences between the prevailing religion at that time and Buddhism which was born as an offshoot.

Hinduism was not the name of the religion which was current at the time of Buddha This name came later after some centuries and owes its origin, as scholars point out, to 'Sindhu' being pronounced by foreigners as 'Hindu' At that time it was referred to variously as Aryan, Vedic, Brahman, Trayi, Sanatan and so on The other religions or faiths, which were distinct from this religion, were many but they were neither very influential nor had a large following. Among them were mainly the Shramana, the Vratya, the Nirgrantha, the Ajivika and other groups. Buddha was attracted to the Shramana way of life, the essential discipline in which consisted in renunciation and austerities After experiments and experiences he veered round to what he called the Middle Path and Yoga These led him to self-realisation and enlightenment

Buddha taught the new Dhamma, and the Sangha developed in a predominantly Vedic environment in which the orthodox religious community naturally opposed the cult of Buddhism The five distinctive features of Buddhism in its relation with the Vedic religion of the day aptly summarized by the famous Buddhist logician, Dharmakirti, in the twelfth century after the Buddha (about 600 A D), may serve as a guide for a discussion of the ways in which Buddhism differed from the Hinduism of those days.

(1) Buddhism, in contrast to Hinduism, discards the acceptance of the authority of the Vedas as divine revelation From the earliest times in India, the Vedas, the basic scriptures of the Hindus, have been the source of religious

authority and inspiration, and have been also looked upon as divine and infallible revelation. Buddha preached against the acceptance of the authority of the Vedas, or for the matter of that, of any books, or persons, or even of the Buddha himself, as being harmful to spiritual progress. "O ye monks, do not accept a thing or belief merely because it has been handed down by tradition. ." The Pali Tripitakas are not scriptures as such for Buddhists in the sense that the Vedas are for Hindus, but are the most faithful record of the words of the Buddha which are to be studied, practised and realized

(2) Buddhism differs from Hinduism concerning its belief in a Creator-God. Buddhism, which is based on the principles of 'dependent origination' of all existence, cannot accept a a first cause, a Creator. Some Hindus believe that God dwells in heaven, a deistic conception; others believe that God pervades each atom of existence, a pantheistic conception, still others have faith in a personal God, such as Rama, Krishna or Shiva These different conceptions of God are unacceptable to the Buddhist. In Buddhism, there is no God but gods. They are only celestial beings living on different subtle planes of existence where they are born, live and die at the end of their span of life. Human beings also take birth on these planes at certain stages of mystic realization in the course of their religious practices. Many Buddhist gods like Vishwakarma, the world master-builder, and Prajapati, the lord of living beings, have their origin in the Vedas, but while they represent presiding deities of the different spheres of nature for the Hindus, in Buddhist writings they are regarded only as highly moral, subtle beings living on a different and higher plane of existence. They are considered to be devotees of the Buddha and his disciple saints, for, the saints in the Holy Order of the Buddha are regarded as spiritually higher than these gods.

Buddha taught his disciples to preach the Dhamma to men and gods alike.

(3) Buddhism also rejects the spiritual efficacy of external rites and rituals, performed very devoutly by most Hindus, such as taking dips in the river Ganga and other waters to wash off all sins, bearing a pattern of holy marks on the body to ward off all evil forces, observing various forms of untouchability, purifying the body by fasting, or practising austerities. Buddhism believes in the possibility of self-purification, attainment of desirelessness, only through self-control, self-culture, self-discipline and self-realization; no external rites will help the attainment of inner purity. The spirit of Buddhism is reflected in one story narrated in the *Therigatha* of the Tripitaka It is a discussion between a nun and a Brahman concerning bathing in the river on a cold winter night The nun said, "If you could go to heaven by bathing in the river, then surely the fish, tortoises, frogs, water-snakes and crocodiles too will attain heaven Moreover, if the sins are washed off by bathing in water, the merits too will be washed off by the water . O Brahman, if you are afraid of sins, it is better not to commit them at all"

(4) Buddhism differs from Hinduism in that it rejects the caste system and untouchability which were current even in those days From the beginning, Hindu social customs and religious authority have emphasized the hierarchy of castes. It has the sanction of the Hindu Shastras in some form or other Twenty-five centuries ago Buddha raised his first voice of protest against this demoralizing practice when he said, "It is not by birth that one becomes a Brahman or an untouchable, but it is through one's acts that one becomes a Brahman or an untouchable."

(5) Finally, Buddhism opposes self-mortification and the practice of severe austerities, as commonly accepted in

Buddha's time by various sects and by the Hindus and Jains today. Even now one can see Hindu ascetics who believe that they are cleansing their souls and securing salvation by smearing their bodies with ashes, sitting in the scorching sun in summer, lying flat on thorns, or piercing the body with spikes. Buddha himself had practised such austerities and he came to the conclusion that they were of no help in the realization of the Truth, rather, they made a man more disturbed and restless. For Buddhism, the main austerity is the burning up of one's own mental defilements and not inflicting pain on the body.

The age of Buddha was one of philosophical renaissance in India with different leaders offering varying interpretations of the universe, of man and of ethical values. There were six distinct philosophies in those days, in addition to the orthodox Vedic schools, which argued in one way or another for ethical nihilism, accidentalism or chance, determinism, materialism and moralism. Buddha had to combat all these arguments and propound his own doctrines of non-substance, impermanence and dependent origination—doctrines which brought a new rational realism of outlook, a fresh profundity in thought, a new discipline in practice and a renaissance of the inner spirit and psyche in man.

The philosophical view expressed in the Vedas is primarily monistic, grounded in the recognition of a basic spiritual existence called Brahma. Buddha challenged this monistic position by saying that it was merely an *apriori* belief, an imaginary construction to believe in a Brahma of which we have no real comprehension. He said that such a belief is like the belief of a man who tries to climb a ladder to the sky to reach a place he knows nothing about, or is like the attempts of a man who falls in love with a beautiful damsel whom no one has seen.

Buddhism's revolutionary approach is unique in the history of religious thought in India, throwing to the traditional faiths a challenge which compelled them to strengthen their defences. Popular religious superstitions and blind faith, carried down through the ages, were shaken to their roots and all the systems of Indian philosophy did their best to meet the rational arguments raised against them by Buddha

In considering the relation between Hinduism and Buddhism, it should be remembered that there were a number of similarities as well as differences Both Hinduism and Buddhism flourished against the background of a common culture for many centuries, there never was a distinctly separate Buddhist society isolated from the rest of the community It should not be thought that Buddhism had any the least disrespect for the Vedas, Buddha referred to the Vedas and the Brahmin sages with due honour in the course of his sermons to Brahman scholars on several occasions What Buddha attacked was the decadent form of the Vedic religion of those days The Vedic sages and Buddhist saints had much in common in their practice of Yoga Buddha emphasized the need for the mystical realization of the sage through deep meditation and called upon his disciples to follow the path of renunciation and yogic discipline; many Buddhist saints came in possession of occult and supernatural powers through yoga, just as yogis following the Vedic religion did

Buddha also taught that all existence is subject to the law of Kamma or Karma, that rebirth is the lot of man, and that suffering is due to attachment—beliefs which were commonly held in his time by followers of the Vedas as well.

Having stated the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism in the words of Dharmakirti, it is instructive

to see how Buddha and Buddhism affected Hinduism of those days and how the latter reacted later to its own advantage. Ultimately, Buddhism could not hold its own as a creed in the land of its birth, though even in the process of disappearing, it put Hinduism on its defence and enriched it in a number of ways Hinduism proved that it had a vitality of its own, which could survive attacks from within, shed old shells, overcome its own weaknesses and come out successful Earlier too, during the clash between Aryan and non-Aryan religions, between Vedic ritualism and Upanishadic disciplines, between Upanishadic varieties of quietism and *Gita's* detached activism, *Sanatana Dharma* or Hinduism had given strong evidence of its resilience and capacity to reorientate But, perhaps in historic times, the healthy reaction of Brahmanism under the impact of Buddhism was the first of its kind It was repeated later in its history, the latest being the most comprehensive renaissance which started with Raja Rammohan Roy in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, on account of the impact of what is known as Western civilization. That wave is still on.

It is one of the traits of the Indian mind that it responds easily to renunciation, selflessness and asceticism. The reason is obvious The call of the higher life, the appeal to religion finds ready listeners here Selfishness, life of the senses, easy ways of living are no doubt natural to the animal or the beast in us. But the evolutionary urge in all of us is to be human, as a step to attain divinity Therefore, rising above animality, conquest of our brute instincts, are supposed to be first steps towards divinity The call of *Ahimsa* too appeals to us for similar reasons

It is not very strange, therefore, that Buddha, his renunciation, his intense and hard search after truth, his sweet personality, became popular very soon, though he preached quite a different doctrine From adoration of the person

to admiration for his principles was but a step, and we know how in the course of some centuries, Buddha secured a place in the Hindu pantheon of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. The prince who had renounced a kingdom in search of truth, a homeless wanderer who breathed compassion and love, and from whom words of wisdom flowed to soothe the suffering hearts of thousands, naturally attracted all What a contrast he was to the Kassapa brothers, who held big fairs and carried on sacrifices involving the slaughter of hundreds of animals!

The *Upanishads* and the *Gita* had already undermined the faith of the people, in sacrifices, rites and rituals. At best, sacrifices could secure transient heaven for the performers. They could neither promise happiness on earth nor birthless beatitude after death Buddha laid great stress on this aspect of the goal of mankind and his appeal to inner experience went home He said, equanimity of mind was absolutely necessary as a preliminary to meditation, which alone can lead us to eternal peace and beatitude *Gita* too stresses *Samatva*, *Samya* which means equilibrium of mind *Gita* goes to the extent of saying that Brahma is 'without blemish and in equilibrium'.

Buddha's teachings entered the hearts of the people and thousands upon thousands adopted his ways. His ministry and organisation of monks and monasteries were new and proved powerful. There were certainly *ashrams*, *gurukuls*, *rishis* and *munis* in India of those times But the residents lived family lives and the Vedic religion of those days did not encourage *sannyasa*, that is, total renunciation

After two centuries, when Asoka came on the scene, Buddha and Buddhism had already caught the imagination of the people in that part of the country After his own conversion, he applied his mind to the organisation and

propagation of Buddhism on a scale unknown to the world of those days. This process went on for centuries and in addition to monasteries, big educational institutions for training monks, came into existence.

Another important feature, which developed, was the use of the plastic arts, for popularising religion. Buddhism was a great pioneer in this field. The credit of conveying Indian religion, Indian thought and Indian art, beyond the confines of India, also belongs to Buddhism.

During the period of the active spread of Buddhism in India and abroad, Hinduism was obviously passive and was absorbing a number of features of Buddhism Buddhism too, adopted much of Hinduism when it spread among the masses, and the line of demarcation, so far as popular Hinduism and popular Buddhism were concerned, became dimmer and dimmer.

A time came when Hinduism began to reassert itself. Many Hindu kings came forward, and for a time, even sacrifices like *Ashwamedha* were performed by some powerful Hindu monarchs. In the world of thought, philosophical controversies had never stopped between scholars, savants and logicians on both sides. Even before Shankaracharya, who led a successful India-wide campaign against all non-Vedic systems of thought, a vigorous intellectual ferment had started in Hinduism. Shankaracharya, however, put the seal on the efforts of all other campaigners and there was then a definite turn in the tide against Buddhism. Though it required another three centuries before Buddhism as such could disappear from India, one can say that the decline had definitely begun. There were, however, far more potent causes, some historic, some within the framework of Buddhism itself, which finally became powerful and made it possible for Hinduism to re-establish itself—but with a great difference

The base of Indian thought and of Hinduism is very wide, comprehensive and spiritual Spiritual unity is the starting point and the point of convergence and synthesis of all the Indian philosophies of life There is accommodation for every point of view and for multitudinous diversity From time to time the genius of the Indian mind reinterprets the words of the Veda as soon as it sees that there have been departures from the truth of the spirit 'The letter killeth, it is the spirit that saves', is nowhere realised more than in India That is how and why the Vedas, the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, have continued to remain the source of eternal inspiration.

While it is a fact that in spite of some basic differences, Buddha and Buddhism were after all protestant growths from out of the soil of Hinduism of the day, it is equally a fact that Hinduism, in the process of outgrowing and absorbing Buddhism through centuries, cleansed itself and developed some healthy strains It may be interesting to point out a few of them here

Once for all, the prestige of sacrifices, rites and rituals as means of spiritual salvation, was lost, never to be regained. The destruction of desire and complete renunciation culminating in *sannyasa*, gained great prestige and began to be looked upon as the highest stage of life It was perhaps from Buddhism that Hinduism learnt the organisation of big religious and educational centres such as *maths* The emphasis on ethical life and service to suffering humanity, as distinct from ceremonial religious life and performance of austerities, gained a new high on account of Buddhism *Ahimsa* in its different aspects profoundly influenced Hindu life and that influence abides The comprehensive use of art in religion and the urge to go beyond the borders of India for taking the message of religion to other peoples

was also characteristic of Buddhism and India is indebted to it for the same. Though all these aspects of give and take between Hinduism and Buddhism deserve far deeper study, there is no doubt that the exchanges have, in the result, benefitted the religious world and the world of thought.

DECLINE OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA

The virtual disappearance of Buddhism as such from India after about fifteen centuries, is one of the most baffling problems in the history of this land. Why did it disappear from the land of its birth, after dominating it for some centuries and disseminating the doctrine to all the parts of the then known world? Of the various reasons suggested, many of which have some truth in them, the most important may be said to be the decline of vigour in the Sangha, its gradual transformation while adopting itself to the way of the masses, the absorption of some of its main principles such as renunciation and *Ahimsa* by Hinduism, the opposition of the vast majority of the Hindu community, and the Muslim invasion.

The decline of vigour in the Order or the Sangha was a major cause of the decline of Buddhism. The vitality of the Sangha lay in the spirit of renunciation, self-discipline, broadmindedness, liberality, service and sacrifice for the many. When those characteristics weakened and were almost lost, the influence of the Order disappeared. Buddha himself, right up to the last days of his life, went on from one place to another inspiring and arousing the people and leading them to the noble path of righteousness. Sariputta, Moggallana and numerous other Arhat disciples of his followed the same ideals. As time went on, the Buddhist monks did their best to live up to those high

principles and succeeded in converting a big part of the known world to the sublime doctrine of the Buddha. In India, great kings and emperors embraced Buddhism and with zealous devotion worked for the preservation and spread of the Dhamma By the eleventh century after the Buddha (sixth century A D) there were great universities and centres for study throughout the country, some with as many as 10,000 students from every Buddhist land. Kings, nobles, merchants and the common people all contributed their share towards the maintenance of these institutions, but although these rich endowments and the royal patronage made the Buddhist organizations strong and prosperous, they, at the same time, gradually undermined the high ideals of renunciation and sacrifice on which the Sangha and the universities were founded The monks in course of time became used to an easy life devoted primarily to academic pursuits and religious celebrations; they grew lax and accepted perverse and worldly practices and beliefs which were contrary to the earlier ideals, and which hardly differed from those of the masses This led to the disintegration of the Order into diverse sects, to the weakening of the moral standards of the Sangha, and to a corresponding waning of their influence on the people as well as to a gradual decline of the religious fervor, faith and devotion of the laity.

The Muslim invasion played an important part in the disappearance of Buddhism from India, for, just when the Sangha began to decline in vigour, the Muslim invaders invaded the country, indiscriminately massacring the people and burning and destroying the shrines, monasteries and schools in their path. Special ferocity was directed towards Buddhist institutions with huge Buddha images, many of gold and of precious stones The shaven-headed monks wearing distinctive saffron robes were easily spotted

and cruelly murdered as idolaters. In the destruction of the University of Nalanda, it is recorded by the Turkish historian Minhazad, in his book *Tavakata-I-Nasiri*, that thousands of monks were burned alive and yet more thousands beheaded, and the burning of the library continued for several months. This extermination of the monks gave a fatal blow to the organization of the Sangha from which it never recovered. There was no one left to carry on the organization or to lead the bewildered laity, who in their helplessness, were exposed to the forcible proselytization of the Muslims and the slow but steady absorption by the Hindus. Although the Hindus and Jains were subjected to the same persecution, since their priests and leaders were scattered among their people and not easily singled out for destruction, they could survive and gradually rebuild the communities. With the destruction of the Sangha, the Buddhists were left without leaders, and Buddhism did not recover.

Another important factor in the decline of Buddhism in India was the strong opposition from the orthodox Hindu traditionalists. The orthodox members of the community had in their hearts always been against Buddhism, chiefly because of the loosening of their own hold on the masses. During the glorious days of Buddhism, under the protection of royal patronage, the sectarian Hindus could not raise their voice against Buddhism, but after its decline, the orthodox community was able to move without restraint and slowly converted Buddhist temples which had escaped destruction into Hindu temples; the Buddhists, lacking strong leadership and subject to the surrounding community pressures, were slowly absorbed. In those parts of India which were not brought under the control of the Muslim invaders, the pressure of the caste system slowly brought about the end of Buddhism.

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM OUTSIDE INDIA

Though Buddhism declined and died as a creed in the land of its birth after some centuries, its spread abroad makes very interesting reading Nearly three hundred years before Christ, Asoka, at the instruction of the Arhat Moggaliputta Tissa, the president of the Third Buddhist Council, initiated a great spiritual movement in India This he did, firstly, to counteract the evil effects of hatred, war and mutual antagonism and, secondly, to establish a true sense of goodwill and brotherhood among the people. The climax of this noble endeavour was reached when he, for the first time in the history of India and also perhaps of the world, sent able and wise missionaries abroad to various foreign countries, to preach the Dhamma, 'for the good and welfare of the many ' Many political and other ties between India and other countries had been established time and often but none of them proved so firm and lasting as this cultural relationship which was founded on real spiritual motives and true goodwill, twenty-three centuries ago In the words of Sir Elliot, 'throughout eastern Asia and the neighbouring islands that influence of Buddhism is clear and wide-spread, even universal '

According to the early Buddhist records found in the *Mahavamsa*, the great chronicle of Ceylon, and *Sasana Vamas*, the chronicle of Sasana (dispensation of the Buddha) of Burma, the great Buddhist Emperor had despatched, 'Dhammadutas', messengers of the Dhamma, to nine countries These countries are named below with the names of the respective missionaries sent·—

1. *Gandhara and Kashmir* including modern Afghanistan and some Central Asian countries, under the leadership of Arhat Majjhantika with a group of monks.

2. *Yonaka* (*Ionian*), including the Greco-Bactrian States, *i.e.*, Syria, Egypt, under Arhat Maharakshita and a group of monks.
3. *China*, including the five Himalayan countries of Nepal, Tibet, Bhot, etc., under Arhat Majjhima and five other elders
4. *Suvanna Bhumi*, Burma, under Arhats Sona and Uttara The neighbouring countries of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, also hold a similar tradition.
5. *Ceylon*, under Arhat Mahinda and five other monks.
6. *Mahinsakamandala*, Mysore and North Kanara including the Deccan States of Hyderabad, under Arhat Mahadeva and some elders
7. *Maharattha*, Maharashtra in Madhya Bharat and Bombay States, under Arhat Maha Dhammarakkhita and some elders
8. *Vanavasi*, the southern part of India including the various Tamil, Telugu and Malabar states, under Arhat Rakkhita and a group of monks.
9 *Aparantaka*, Western India including Sindh, Baluchistan and Saurashtra, under the Arhat Yona (Yavana *i.e.*, Greek) Dhammarakkhi and some monks.

All these nine countries were not entirely outside the then Asokan Empire. The latter four countries formed a part of India but were not Buddhist The former five were outside India and some of them were converted continued and to be Buddhist

After Burma had become Buddhist, some of the places in that country were named after important Indian towns and cities It is due to this fact perhaps that later Burmese writers have continued to identify erroneously the last two countries, *i e.*, Vanavasi and Aparantaka, to some parts of Burma.

The Asokan inscriptions also substantiate this account. The inscription No 13 mentions—"This conquest by Dhamma, Devanapriya *i e*, Asoka considers the highest .. .."

"And this has been won repeatedly even as far as the countries where Yona King Antiyoga (Antiouchus II of Syria) is ruling and beyond his kingdom, the four kings—*viz* Tulamaya, Antekini, Maka and Alikyashudala (*i e*, Ptolemy II, Philandelphos of Egypt (B C 285-247), Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia (B C 276-239), Magas of Cyrene (B C. 300-250), and either Alexander of Epirus (B C 272-255) or more probably, Alexander of Corinth (B.C 252-244), —(see inscription of Asoka by Hulzsch), likewise towards the south .. .. as far as Tamraparni (Ceylon)" Names of many other countries too appear in this list where the Dhamma had taken root A brief account of how the Dhamma spread in these Buddhist countries may be seen below.

CEYLON

Before the Arhat Mahinda and his five associates went to the island of Ceylon, a pact of friendship had been already concluded by the king of Ceylon with Devanampiya Tissa, Emperor Asoka And even it is recorded that under the royal insignia of the Emperor, the Sinhala King was crowned for the second time

When, therefore, Mahinda went to Ceylon and spoke to the king by his Christian name, he was not, perhaps, misunderstood The Arhat Mahinda and his fellow monks had arrived at Mohintale, a hill about 7 miles from the capital city of Anuradhapura, on a festive day, when the king, with a large retinue, was out on a hunting excursion. While there, the king was amazed to hear a voice calling him by his name and proceeded to find out who the person might be He soon came across the holy Arhat Between them there started a very lively discussion. Finding the king very

intelligent, the venerable Mahinda preached the Dhamma to him. The royal party was so much impressed that they all accepted the great teaching.

The king took with him the honoured Saint with great honour and pomp and offered the royal Mahamegha Park to him. He then built there a monastery for the Sangha which later became the famous Maha Vihara, that formed the citadel of Theravada Buddhism in Ceylon. With the conversion of the royal family and the nobility, Buddhism soon spread all over the country and, within the life time of Mahinda, Ceylon became a stronghold of Buddhism.

The daughter of the king, princess Anula, was inspired to dedicate her life to the noble cause of the Dhamma and became a nun Arhat Mahinda then advised the king to request Emperor Asoka to send his sister Sanghamitta, herself an Arhat, to found the order of nuns (Bhikkhuni) in Ceylon. Emperor Asoka complied with the request and sent the venerable Theri together with a group of nuns. And, along with this group, he also sent a sapling of the sacred Bodhi Tree, which was planted with great pomp and jubilation near the Maha Vihara monastery. This tree, known as the Jayashri Maha-Bodhi, is still to be seen at Anuradhapura and today it is one of the holiest objects of Buddhist worship. Sanghamitta soon established an order of nuns in which the princess Anula and many ladies of distinguished families were admitted. Tissa also received relics of Buddha from the mainland and built a great stupa, now known as the Thuparama Dagoba. Thus, Buddhism found a firm sanctuary in Ceylon within the life-time of these great missionaries. Dutthagamini, a descendant of Tissa, did much in furthering the cause of Dhamma. He built great Dagobas and Viharas such as the majestic Ruwanweli Saya Dagoba, and Loha Mahapasada.

The next important event in the spread of Buddhism

in Ceylon took place when the Fourth Council was convened by the Sinhalese Sangha under the patronage of King Vattagamani in 80 B.C, in the rock caves of Matala, conducted by five hundred monks with Arhat Rakkhita as Chairman. From the time of the Buddha up to the present times, the Dhamma has been handed down orally, in succession, from teacher to pupil The entire Tripitaka and its early commentaries were memorised by expert monks A perfect oral tradition has been kept unbroken with great zeal and devotion It has been even considered a sacrilege to reduce the sacred teaching to writing But when it was found that Arhats capable of preserving the Dhamma in its pristine purity were growing less in number, the Sangha in its Fourth Council decided to commit, for the first time, the entire Tripitaka to writing Thus, the Tripitaka was preserved in the form of palm or ola leaf manuscripts which are still to be found in the temples in Ceylon

After this, till the arrival of Buddhaghosha, about the 5th century A D, the history of the Sangha was not quite eventful. There had been some dissensions and quarrels between the rival sects of Maha Vihara and Abhayagiri The Vitulyavadins, a Mahayana sect, had created some peculiar problems by introducing very many heterodox practices which led to constant friction and rivalries.

Buddhaghosha was an Indian monk, born of a Brahman family of Gaya, who went to Ceylon with the object of writing the commentaries of the Tripitakas back into the Pali language from the native Sinhalese This he did with great success While residing at Maha Vihara, he wrote down a great number of commentaries covering practically the major portion of the Canon He also wrote an independent work called the *Visuddhi Magga*, a kind of resume, which deals comprehensively with the entire teaching of the Canon in one volume. But for these commentraies

it would have been quite impossible for the later generations to understand the spirit of the teaching, and the Dhamma would have been long lost to humanity.

There were other commentators like Dhammapala (a South Indian monk from Kanchipuram, more or less a contemporary of Buddhaghosha), Mahanama, Kassapa and others who wrote down remaining commentaries. Dhammapala also wrote *Tikas* (sub-commentaries), on the works of Buddhaghosha, like *Visuddhi Magga*, and so on. All these literary activities definitely gave a final shape and, form which kept the continuity of the Dhamma till our own times.

Buddhism, like many other faiths in the world, had to undergo many a vicissitude, and in Ceylon, this was particularly true A period came which might be considered as another wave of rising of the Dhamma in the 11th century. King Parakrama Bahu, who may be called the Sinhalese Asoka, removed his capital to Polanaruwa and gave a new impetus to the life of the people. He got the Sangha reformed and purified and engaged himself in numerous religious activities. Many great religious institutions, like Parivenas, Viharas and Dagobas were built. He established good relationship with the various Buddhist countries like Burma, Siam etc It was during his time that the great Sariputta Thera convened a great assembly of learned monks and got almost all the sub-commentaries written in the Pali language. There were many foreign scholars who did valuable work at that time. The name of venerable Anuradha, another Indian monk, who wrote many works on Abhidhamma during this period will always be remembered. There were some outstanding Burmese monks, the pupils of Sariputta, who also contributed substantially to the Buddha Sasana. From this time till about the beginning of the 10th century, that is, till the arrival of the Portuguese

in 1505, Ceylon became the beaconlight of Buddhism and her supremacy in learning and poetry was recognised by all the Buddhist countries.

After foreign occupation by the Portuguese, Dutch and British, and with the downfall of the Sinhalese Kingdom, Buddhism became weak, and once, it was even lost

Now, there are three main sects, the Siamese sect, the Amarapura sect and the Rammana sect, which also have their sub-sects. There is no fundamental or doctrinal differences between these sects The division is based purely on historical grounds, while the former sect has derived its ordination from Siam, the latter two are the recipients of ordination from Burma.

At present, among the famous places of worship, Anuradhapura, Mahintala, Polanaruwa, Matala rock temple, Dambulla rock temple, Kandy tooth-temple, Sumana Kuti or Adams Peak and Kalaniya are very outstanding Tradition says that Buddha had visited the island three times during his ministrations.

BURMA

The account of the early history of Buddhism in Burma is rather uncertain It is only from the time of King Anoratha of Pagan in the eleventh century (1010-52) that we stand on the firm ground of proper history Prior to that, all the available accounts (except for the arrival of Arhats Sona and Uttara, who were despatched by venerable Moggaliputta Tissa after the Third Council during Asoka's reign) are based purely on tradition, which however in very many cases is supported by available remains of antiquity

Thus, the history of the spread of Buddhism in Burma may be roughly divided again into two distinct periods (*i*) the pre-Anorathan period, and (*ii*) the Pagan

and post-pagan period. The former can be divided again into two periods—that of Thiri Khettara (in Pali, Siri Khetta, near Prome), under the Pyu Kings and of Suvanna Bhumi (modern Thaton) under Mon Kings, the Pegu kings and later the Mandalay Kings.

The *Vinaya Pitaka* mentions that two Burmese merchants, Tapassu and Bhallika, while returning to their native place, Okkala, happened to pass Buddha Gaya. Being prompted by a deity they went to the Buddha and offered him some eatables for the first time after his Enlightenment. Having accepted them as disciples, Buddha gave them a few hairs from his head as a relic. Burmese tradition holds that these two merchants were residents of Dagon (now called Rangoon) which was formerly known as Okkala and that they had gone on a trading mission to India It is further stated that these merchants having returned to their native town of Dagon, enshrined the hair relic of the Master in a Chaitya (Pagoda) which later on came to be called as the Swedagon Pagoda, now one of the wonders of the world It towers most majestically with solid gold plated pinnacles in the heart of Rangoon and is perhaps the most frequented holy shrine of the Buddhist world. Thus, traditionally the names of Tapassu and Bhallika are associated with the bringing of Buddhism in Burma for the first time

The name Thiri Khettara sounds like a derivation of the ancient Indian city of Sri Kshetra (modern Puri) on the eastern coast of Orissa Indian culture being the main source of the cultures of the various Asian countries, the adoption of the names of various Indian cities and towns was quite in vogue in ancient times.

Thiri Khettara, according to tradition, was founded by a Pyu King, Dvattaboung (a corruption of Pali Dattavamsa) who was a contemporary of King Kalasoka who

had been the patron of the Second Council at Vaishali. The king, it is said, became a pious Buddhist when he saw that his two sons had already become monks, and later Arhats Still later, one of his queens and his daughter also became nuns Among the many shrines and pagodas built by the pious Dvattaboung round about Prome, the Shwe Sandaw Pagoda is said to be one which is still to be seen in good condition

Buddhism flourished in this kingdom for about 500 years thereafter, and when the dynasty of Dvattaboung ended in about 80 A D , the country was deserted, marking thereby the end, as it were, of a period in Burmese early history.

Mons are the other early inhabitants of Burma who had their capital at Suddhammapura, also known as Suvanna Bhumi, which has been identified with Thaton in Moulmein district in Lower Burma Mons are also called Talaings (Telugu) who originally came from south-east of India *i e.*, from modern Andhra or Telangana Tradition holds that Buddha had paid a visit to Suddhammapura (Thaton) in the eighth year of his Enlightenment and prepared the ground for the future growth of the Sasana Later on, the same year the Buddha passed away An elder Gavampati, it is said, visited this place and converted the king Siharaja and a great number of other people And within eight years of his missionary endeavours he, it is further said, built no less than thirty-seven shrines and the Dhamma was made known to many in the Ramanna country, as it was then called

Subsequently, in the 235th year of Buddha's *Parinibbana,* the two Theras, Sona and Uttara, visited Suvanna Bhumi and preached the Doctrine to the multitude. From that time till the advent of Anoratha (*i e* , between the 3rd century B C and the eleventh century A.D) tradition holds

that Buddhism flourished in Lower Burma with Thaton as the centre. Thaton being a noted port on the regular trade route between the southern and eastern ports of India and the various south eastern countries of Asia, there had been a regular visit of missionaries, especially from the famous mission-training centres of Amaravati and Conjeevaram. It is also said that Thaton became a kind of spring-board for the missionaries who went further east to Siam, Cambodia and the Indonesian states of Sumatra, Java, etc The Mons being related to the Khmer races of these eastern countries, it is quite possible that Buddhism had also been taken to those countries.

The Burmese believe that Buddhaghosha visited Thaton also in 5 A D., on his way back from Ceylon, but there is no record in the Pali literature to substantiate this view. Two Pali works called *Sasanavansa* and *Sasanapaveni* which deal with the history of the Dhamma, endorse this tradition It should be understood that there were Arhats right from the time when the Dhamma was founded by Sona and Uttara in the Suvanna Bhumi (in the Ramanna country), down to the time of king Manuha (*i e.*, eleventh century A.D.) in the city of Suddhamma

During this long period, many great shrines and pagodas had been built by successive kings and devotees of whom the name of Kyaikhtiyo remains outstanding. This pagoda is perched on a rock which is perilously on the edge of a ridge. What is really interesting is that this rock which can even be slightly rocked, remains strangely firm and not even an earthquake can shake it About the remains of this period, some Pali inscriptions in South Indian scripts have been discovered They are said to belong to the Amaravati school between 2nd and 6th century. A D. It should however be remembered that in Burma, side by side with the spread of Theravada Buddhism, there was

also a strong Mahayana wave from China, Cambodia and the Malayan states, and also from north India This fact is amply proved by the accounts of the conditions prevalent in Upper Burma in the time of Anoratha

Truly speaking, Anoratha was the first great historical figure whose zeal for the spread of the Dhamma was responsible for all the subsequent Buddhist activities which ultimately made Burma a stronghold of Buddhism

Anoratha began his rule at Pagan when the religion of the people of Upper Burma was a strange mixture of Tantrism, Mahayana and some forms of Hinduism In Pagan itself the Aricult, a curious sensualistic cult based on Tantrik and Hindu ritualism, was widely practised by the people. It is said that the king somehow did not relish it So when he met the Arhat elder Shin Arhan and heard the simple yet profound teaching of Theravaḍa Buddhism he was immediately impressed and he requested the saint to remain at Pagan for the establishment of the Dhamma The elder Arhat was the son of an Indian Brahman of Thaton who had been converted to Buddhism. On his advice, the king decided to obtain Buddha's relics and editions of the Tripitaka from the Mon king of Thaton, Manuha. Accordingly, he sent a royal mission to Thaton with the request for some relics and editions of Tripitaka. King Manuha, however, showed some contempt by calling his people 'heretics' and refused the request

This enraged Anoratha and he attacked the Mon kingdom and after capturing the king took all the relics and Tripitaka editions from his possession along with a large number of learned monks to preach at Pagan He returned as a great victor to his capital with the entire spoil

He built great pagodas and monasteries, directed a vigorous missionary drive among his people, got the

Tripitaka transcribed for the first time in Burmese characters and did a number of other things for the spread of Buddhism Later, to make sure that the Thaton edition of the Canon was the original one, he sent four of his trusted ministers to Ceylon for investigation and found it to be true to the original Only then did he rest content as far as the scriptures were concerned It may well be said that Anoratha was the Burmese Asoka Apart from being a pious man, he was also a valiant conqueror. He had earlier conquered Prome and practically the whole of Burma, and this vast territory was consolidated for the first time under one rule. He decided to convert the country into a citadel of Dhamma Although he did not live to see his dream fulfilled, the movement set in motion by him was later strengthened faithfully by his descendants and his expectations were amply justified In this noble task, the names of Kyanzittha, Alaungaitha and a few more are cherished as a lovable memory by the Burmese

In the year 1200 A D. Chapta, a Burmese monk, who had received his Dhamma training in Ceylon under the celebrated Sariputta of Polanaruwa, initiated another Dhamma purifying movement in Upper Burma with his headquarters at Naungu, a few miles from Pagan He purged the Sangha of corrupt elements and established what is called the Sinhalese tradition Fifty years later, a Sinhalese monk, Sariputta, did the same thing in Lower Burma This period of Pagan, however, came to an end when Upper Burma was invaded by the grandson of Kublai Khan, the Mongol emperor of China, who ransacked Pagan and tried to destroy all its glories Even now, the greatness of Pagan becomes evident by a casual visit to the place. After so many centuries of neglect and disrepair, the great pagodas still inspire awe in the minds of the visitors. They

stand in solitary desolation as significant relics of the glorious past

The next important event in the Buddhist history of Burma during the reign of king Dhammaceti of Pegu (1460-1491) was the cleansing of the Sangha and the establishment of the pure monastic tradition which continues till our own time He was a monk himself before he became a monarch and it was this fact that made him so zealous a supporter of the religion of the Buddha The Burmese Sangha had become corrupt So, in order to keep the tradition pure, he sent a mission to Ceylon and got learned Theras to re-ordain the Burmese monks For this purpose, he built and consecrated a new Chapter House, the famous Kalyani (Siam), and got, it is said, 15,666 monks re-ordained in the tradition of Maha Vihara For all this he was the sole 'dayaka' (supporter) It was through his piety and zeal that the famous 'Kalyani inscriptions' were inscribed for giving strength and life to the Sangha

The next event of importance was when the Fifth Council was convened under the patronage of King Mindon, in the year 1871 In this council, the entire Tripitaka was inscribed in 729 big marble slabs, on which were erected beautiful small structures with domes and thus a new life was given to religion which was threatened by the materialistic influences of the western intruders

After about seventy years of British, and later of Japanese occupation, Burma at heart remained Buddhist. In recent years, however, with the penetration of the materialistic cult of Communism, the minds of some people have become confused But the wise section of the population and the government with the advice of the Sangha, decided to convene another Council And within a short period, a great cave resembling the Saptaparni cave at Rajgir and a mass of imposing buildings were erected

on the plateau of Siri Mangala Hill, some seven miles from Rangoon, for convening the Sixth Council. This Council undoubtedly roused a new zeal for the restoration of religious glory It was started on the full moon day of May 1954 and concluded on the full moon day of May 1956 to synchronize with the holy event of 2500th Buddha Jayanti which fell on that day. This Sanghayana or Council was attended by about two thousand monks of all the various Buddhist countries.

SIAM

Traditionally, the arrival of Buddhism in Siam is attributed to the same two celebrated missionaries, Sona and Uttara, who went to Burma. Siam, at present, is a strong Theravada Buddhist country It was established as recently as seven hundred years ago with the advent of the Thai race, the present inhabitants of the country. The original natives were the Mons and Lawas who have been absorbed in the Thai population.

The earlier Mons of Thaton and the Mons of modern Siam, being of the same stock, had family relations from the earliest times; hence when Thaton became the citadel of Theravada Buddhism, the same traditions spread wherever the Mon people lived. It may be interesting to note here that since far earlier times there was regular commercial intercourse between India and these eastern countries. Many colonies of Indian traders had also settled there from the pre-Buddhistic times.

Relics and antiquities, such as fragments of images, stupas, monasteries, the figure of Dhammachakra and deer, have been found among the ruins of Nakorn Pathom (or Phra Pathomcedi as it is now called). The ancient name of the place was Siri Chai, a centre of Mon culture. These

relics convincingly support the tradition mentioned above. The culture of the Mon people under the influence of earliest Buddhism, as renewed by the Amaravati and Conjeevaram schools, throve for many centuries This period is called the Dvaravati period which extended till about the tenth century A D, when the Khmer culture of Cambodia superseded This highly Indianised (more Hindu than Mahayana) culture of the Khmers lasted only for a few centuries when the present Thai race overran the country from the southern Chinese State of Nau Chao about the end of the thirteenth century

Thus, the spread of Buddhism in Siam may be roughly divided into three main periods, namely —(*i*) Early Buddhism of Asokan, Amaravati and Conjeevaram types, (*ii*) Mahayana, and (*iii*) Theravada from Burma and Ceylon

We have already discussed how early Buddhism was introduced by the two great apostles of the Dhamma and how it was continued later on

The introduction of Mahayana Buddhism in Siam was from two different quarters and in two separate waves. The first one was from the kingdom of Shri Vijaya of the Polynesian countries of Java, Sumatra and Malaya and extended mostly over the peninsular portion of the southern part of Thailand. This was between the 5th and 9th century A D. The second was from Cambodia and extended to the eastern and central parts, when king Surya Varman of Cambodia held sway over this country It is further said that since Kashmir and north India were ideologically related with the Khmer empire, Siam too was subjected to that influence during this period

The modern Thai race originally hailed from Nan Chao, South China This race had been gradually migrating towards the south in a fan-like formation extending over a

very large territory which included Assam, Burma, Thailand and Laos. In Assam they are known as the Ahoms, in Burma as the Shans. As mentioned above, the migration was gradual but when the grandson of Kublai Khan attacked southern China, these tribes made a mass trek over Siam and later completely overran the country These tribes were mostly animistic Mahayanists and there was no difficulty therefore in absorbing the local Lawas and Mons who had fallen into decadence

This brings us to the third phase when Theravada Buddhism became the universally accepted religion of the new race of Thailand. It may be recalled that king Anoratha of Pagan had conquered not only the Mon country of Lower Burma but had also influence over the northern part of Siam Many of the Thai chiefs visited Pagan during this great period of the revival of Theravada and introduced the same in their own areas The first Thai king and national hero, Phra Ruang, who was responsible for ousting the Khmers and who established the kingdom of Sukotai, had been a devout Buddhist He did much to encourage people to accept it But his son, Ram Kamheng, went further. He was a zealous Buddhist and he sent a mission to Ceylon and got a Sinhalese Mahathera to establish a pure Sangha The revival initiated by Parakrama Bahu had a tremendous effect over all these countries, namely, Burma, Siam, Cambodia and Laos Ceylon was considered as the seat of pure Dhamma. The Sinhala elder was called the Sangharaja, prelate of Siamese Sangha, and a special monastery for him was built by the king at Sukotai, now known as Tani. This monastery was known as Dat Arannika where the king had got his famous 'inscription' inscribed giving all the details of this notable transaction. His grandson followed his footsteps and some say that he was even more zealous in promoting the cause of religion.

King Dhammaraja I, as he is called, (1350-70 A D), sent monks to Pegu and Ceylon and got another prelate from Ceylon who was known as Somdet Sumana Mahasami

The Thai period is divided into three dynasties *viz*, the Sukotai, Ayodhya and Bangkok dynasties. The Sukotai kings ruled for about a century when Ayodhya became the centre under king Ramadhipati I During this period Cambodia became a vassal country of Thailand This downfall followed the sack of Ayodhya by the Burmese in the year 1767 A D. After the fall of Ayodhya, Bangkok became the metropolis of the Siamese, and still continues as such In spite of all these dynastic changes, Buddhism continued to be the fountain of Thai culture and life Buddhism is the state religion and the king is called the 'defender of the faith' For the Siamese, life would be meaningless without Buddhism The Thai Government, like the other Buddhist countries, carried out a big programme for the revitalization of the Master's 'Great Message of Peace' during the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations (May 1956).

CAMBODIA

The religious history of Cambodia may be divided into three distinct periods, namely, (*i*) Early Buddhism belonging to Sona-Uttara tradition, (*ii*) Strong Hindu and Mahayana period, and (*iii*) Theravada under the influence of Siam and Ceylon

The Indo-Chinese peninsular countries like Cambodia, Campa (Annam), Vietnam, Laos and others and the Polynesian Malayan group of countries had been so fully colonised by Indians, and their ways of living so completely Indianised that these countries were considered the 'south-eastern corner of Jambudwipa' — a 'farther India' The early

Chinese called Cambodia the kingdom of Fu-nan and their annals are replete with accounts of the infiltration of Indian culture, of Indian monks and of the Indian kings who ruled over these areas. I Ching, the Chinese pilgrim, after his return from Nalanda, while visiting Cambodia, writes in 695 A.D. : "to the south-west of Campa (Annam) lies the country of Ponan, formerly called Fu-nan, which is the southern corner of Jambudwipa (India) of old. It was a country the inhabitants of which lived almost naked, the people were mostly worshippers of spirits and later on Buddhism flourished there, but a 'wicked' king (a Hindu) has now expelled and exterminated them all and now there are no members of the Buddhist Brotherhood (Sangha) at all" The authoritative Chinese dates have also been confirmed by Cambodian inscriptions of the Indian kings written in alphabets closely resembling some South Indian or Deccan scripts.

Ethnologically, the Khmers of Cambodia are closely related to the Mon race and the Mons had regular political, cultural and even racial intercourse with this part. The form of earlier Buddhism introduced by the two apostles, Sona and Uttara, among the Mons must have entered this area also, as mentioned by Cambodian tradition. From the account of I Ching, as also from the accounts of Chinese annals, early Buddhism flourished in Cambodia at least till about the fifth century A.D

According to Chinese and early Cambodian accounts, an Indian Brahman, Kaundinya, came to Cambodia somewhere about the first and second centuries A D. and established a dynasty after him There is also a story of another Kaundinya invading the country somewhere about 400 A D The Kaundinyas are said to have been, according to Cambodian Liang annals, the early rulers of Java, Sumatra and Borneo. Thus, with the founding of an Indian dynasty

and with the presence of a large number of Indians, from this period onwards Cambodia was Indianised on a large scale. Brahmanism slowly superseded Buddhism, though some form of Mahayana did exist side by side The preponderance of Brahmanism is clearly evident from the remains of various temples, images of innumerable gods like Vishnu, Shiva and others, inscriptions and so on. This period lasted till about the thirteenth century. The famous temples of Angkor Vat and some others are the majestic products of this zealous Hindu period, which are still preserved The kings of this period bore the title of Varman (an epithet for Kshatriya kings of India) such as Jayavarman, Bhavavarman, Rudravarman, Suryavarman and so on Bhavavarman is said to have exterminated the earlier form of Buddhism All state and religious transactions were carried on in Sanskrit language A definite hierarchy was built based on caste system in which the Indian Brahmans and their successors were supreme

Towards the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there had been some great architectural activities by powerful kings like Suryavarman and Udayadityavarman, who had extended their dominion to Campa and Siam After the 13th century, however, Cambodia was always in danger from the dominant position of Siam and even until about the early nineteenth century, there were constant rivalries. Mahayana during this Brahmanical period existed in Cambodia but it remained so closely in alliance with Brahmanism that it was hard to distinguish it as a separate religion.

With the advent of Parakramabahu the Great, during the Polanaruwa period in Ceylon (11 A D), the renaissance of Theravada had set in motion currents that reached, in waves, one after another, the far away shores of Burma, Siam, Cambodia and Laos; and, within a century or two, all these countries became, and still remain, fervent Thera-

vada Buddhists. In Cambodia this influence came at first from Siam and then directly from Ceylon and Burma.

The simple Khmer and Cham folks, the common masses, had very little authority and position. The Brahmanical hierarchy had reduced them into just serfs for the purpose of serving them in their ritualism When, therefore, the new lively race, the Thais, with their simple and vigorous doctrine of Theravada, came to the country, the common men found a new message; a new light shone in them and they adopted ardently the new religion. The account of a great Chinese visitor, who visited Angkor Vat in 1296, is very significant He says, "the Brahmins had high offices but had no schools. Those of the laity who desired education spent some portion of their youth in a Buddhist monastery (as they still do) and then returned to the work-a-day world Such a state of things, naturally, resulted in the diffusion of Buddhism among the people, while the Brahmans dwindled to a court hierarchy." Since its introduction, Cambodia has ardently and faithfully followed Theravada The kings here, as in Siam, are the 'defenders of the faith.' The Sangharaja is the supreme chief of the Sangha and the Preceptor of the royal family (Rajaguru) Traces of Brahmanism still survive in the court ceremonials but that does not prevent the king from being a devout Buddhist Cambodia celebrated Buddha Jayanti in 1956 with great enthusiasm.

LAOS, VIET-NAM, ANNAM AND COCHIN CHINA

The history of Buddhism in these Indo-Chinese associated states is, more or less, allied to that of Cambodia In the earlier days of this era, the influence of Buddhism had entered these states through the early Indian immigrants, the Mons and Khmers. Later, these countries were thoroughly

Hinduised. But, being near to China, Mahayana Buddhism also flourished side by side. Even today except for Laos, in the other three associated states of Indo-China, Mahayana is the only religion though during this century there is also a movement that has been set afoot principally from Cambodia to revive Theravada. In Vietnam, there are now quite a good number of Theravada Buddhists including a Vietnamese Sangha at Saigon and other places.

Laos is a Theravada Buddhist country, where Buddhism was introduced somewhere about the 13th century A.D. Ethnologically, the Laotian Thais belong to the same family of Nan Chao tribes. They had migrated to the area, approximately, at the same time as the Thai, the Shan and the Ahom tribes.

The present Laotians have kept up some of the earlier traditions of the early inhabitants, a tribe akin to the Mons, in spite of the fusion. For instance, in writing down the Tripitakas, they have used a script that is derived from the Mons and closely resembles the modern Burmese. The Thais of Siam, however, have a quite different script which seems to have been acquired from the Khmers since both the modern Cambodian and Siamese scripts are very much alike.

Theravada is the chief religion of the Laos as in Cambodia and Siam. There is a Sangharaja and the king is the chief patron. Among the Chinese population in these parts, it is Mahayana that thrives.

SUMATRA, JAVA, BALI, BORNEO AND MALAYA

The Polynesian Malayan countries, *i.e.*, Sumatra, Java, Bali, Borneo and Malaya, once formed a flourishing Buddhist region. This area was a chain of prosperous Indian colonies and on account of a somewhat regular intercourse

between these countries and India, Buddhism came here in very early times. Later, Hinduism became more widespread, though Mahayana too thrived. There were, however, some clashes also at times between the Buddhists and the Hindus, especially when the latter were aggressive. We have alaready mentioned abouf the great kingdom of Shri Vijaya, and later on the Shailendras, whose dominions extended quite forinto Siam and Indo-China. Some kings of the Shri Vijaya dynasties, as well as some of the Shailendras, were ardent Buddhists. Some of the famous remains like those of majestic Borobodur group of temples and other Buddhist monuments are the finest examples of the piety of these kings. The famous Chinese pilgrims like Yuang Chwang, I Ching and others have mentioned the flourishing condition of Buddhism in this area during their times. The Kalasan inscriptions, dated 778 A.D., engraved in Nagari characters, record the construction of a temple of Tara and of a Mahayana monastery.* An eminent Chinese book *Kao Seng Chuan* (Biographies of Great Monks), dated 519 A.D., makes mention of Gunavarman, son of the king of Kashmir, who renounced kingship, became a Buddhist monk and converted Java to Buddhism.

At present, these countries are inhabited mainly by Muslims but there still remain pockets of Buddhists here and there. In Indonesia specially, there are still a good number of Mahayana Buddhists, who have successfully resisted active proselytization by Muslims.

These countries were converted to Islam only after the 15th century. The Arabs first settled at Malacca in Malaya as traders. They slowly penetrated among the Buddhists and Hindus through matrimonial alliances and influenced them by economic pressure. Later, when they

*Vide Sir Charles Eliot *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 156.

grew powerful, they overran the country and proselytised the people even forcefully Bali, however, still remains an orthodox Hindu island Even today, the names of various places and persons and the various customs obtaining there clearly reveal Buddhist and Hindu influences which have continued in spite of the fanatical zeal of the conquerors

CHINA

According to the Chinese tradition, king Ming Ti of the Han dynasty is supposed to have been the first convert to Buddhism In the year 65 A D he despatched a group of 18 persons to India in search of the sublime Doctrine of the Buddha After a sojourn of eleven years in India, they went back to China with a collection of Buddhist books, some images of the Buddha and two great scholar-monks of Magadha, named Kashyap Matang and Dharmaraksha. As the monks arrived on two white horses, the monastery in which they were accommodated began to be called Loyang, or 'The White Horse Monastery' That monastery became the chief centre of the Buddhist mission in that country Most of the Indian monks who went to China had their headquarters in this monastery. The major portions of the existing Chinese Buddhist scriptures were translated from their original Sanskrit version in this place. This initial success there inspired new zeal in the Buddhist missionaries of India for centuries. They went over to China and devoted their lives to translating books and to the propagation of the Dhamma in that great country Indian saints and scholars like Aryakala, Suenaya, Chilukala and others were amongst the first batch who went to China The chief missionaries who went to China in the 2nd and 3rd centuries were Mahakala, Dharmapala, Dhar-

makula and Tuhyana. It is recorded that by that time more than 350 books had already been translated.

In the 4th century, China came under the suzerainty of the Chin dynasty. During the rule of that dynasty Buddhism flourished in China still further. In 381, Hain Vu, a powerful monarch of this dynasty, erected a grand Buddhist temple in Nanking. Many monasteries were established in different parts of the country, and a large majority of the population were converted to Buddhism

In the beginning of the 5th century, in the north-western parts of India, there flourished a Buddhist genius, a monk-scholar, the great Kumarajiva. He had studied Buddhism in Kashmir and Kashghar. He was staying at Koocha under the patronage of the king, who was a Buddhist and a devotee of the monk. It was during this time that that part of the country was attacked and conquered by the Chinese. It is said that the general, at the express order of the Chinese king, took the scholar-monk Kumarajiva with him He was given a rousing reception and requested to organise a Buddhist mission in China. Kumarajiva was found to be a master-translator of Sanskrit Buddhist books into Chinese. He is regarded as the originator of the most mature style of the Chinese language, perhaps, even sounder than that of Yuan Chwang. His book on the life of Ashvaghosha and Nagarjuna is a masterpiece of literary art. His chief collaborators were Dharmarakkha, Sanghabhadra, Dharmapriya and Buddhabhadra. Thousands of Chinese monks were ordained and trained by him. The well-known Chinese traveller, Fa-Hien was also a disciple of his.

At the earnest request and invitation of the Chinese king Sang-Van-Ti, Gunavarman, another illustrious Indian monk, went over to China and reached Nanking in 431. A special monastery was built for him, which was named

Jetavana Vihara The main contributions of Gunavarman towards the spread of Buddhism in China were, firstly, the propagation of the Saddharmapundarika among the masses, and secondly, the establishment of the Order of Buddhist nuns The other important Indian missionaries who followed him were Gunabhadra in 435, Dharmajalayasa in 481 and Ratnamati and Bodhiruchi in the beginning of the 6th century. It was during this period that the great Buddhist mystic saint, Bodhidharma, reached China and aroused the entire country with his message of spirituality Though for the major part of his stay in China, he kept himself shut in seclusion, plunged in deep meditation, his very name even today is a stirring force in the religious life of the country.

The other notable names of Indian Buddhist monks who went to China in the sixth century are Jinagupta, Jnanabhadra, Jinayasa and Yasagupta

The great Chinese savant, traveller, translator and missionary, Yuan Chwang visited India in 629 He lived in India for seven years and studied Buddhism in the Nalanda University for two years He returned home with a large collection of books and images His Chinese translations of 59 Buddhist Sanskrit books are available even today and are regarded as the summit of both religious and literary scholarship.

By the end of the tenth century, the Sung dynasty, which came into power, succeeded in organising and establishing real sovereignty. The kings of this dynasty were devout Buddhists They revived their cultural relations with Nalanda and invited many Indian masters to China The last Indian monk in the above series of missionaries of whom some mention is made, was the famous logician of Nalanda, Janashri. He went there in the middle of the eleventh century. After that, the stream of Indian monks

to China ceased to flow for two reasons, firstly, because the field of their missionary activities gradually shifted from China to Tibet and, secondly, because the Buddhist centres in India became weak after the repeated attacks of the Muslim invaders who burnt their universities and libraries and massacred the monks.

KOREA—JAPAN

From China, Buddhism travelled eastward, to Korea and then to Japan. In 376 a Chinese Monk, Sundo, reached Ko-gur-yu, the northern province of Korea, with valuable Buddhist images and religious books. He succeeded in converting the people without any opposition, and established two large monasteries for his missionary associations in other parts of Korea.

In 384, another Chinese monk Mas-Mow went to the province of Pak Chi. He was given a hearty reception both by the people and the king.

In 552, king Simai despatched some Buddhist missionaries to Mimmai, the Emperor of Japan, with a request to give them all facilities to propagate the Dhamma in his country The kings and the people of Korea continued for centuries a determined drive to spread the teachings in their neighbouring country of Japan. The first Buddhist monk who went to Japan from Korea was Shiba-Tassu, who established the first Buddhist shrine by installing an image of the Buddha in a straw-hut on the southern sea coast. It is interesting to note that the Buddhist mission in Japan was very successful chiefly because of the zealous efforts of the nuns of Korea, who penetrated the inner apartments of the Japanese family and converted them to Buddhism.

Amongst the missionaries who reached Japan there was

one from India too, whose name was Bhikkhu Hodo. In the early parts of the seventh century, the illustrious Emperor of Japan, So-toku, became a devout follower of Buddhism, and with Asokan zeal did his best to spread the Dhamma in his country. Different Japanese Buddhist saints flourished from time to time. They went to China for receiving training and inspiration and propagated their creed in the country. Most of them are prospering even to the present day.

In the eighth century, Nara, the first royal capital of Japan, became the main seat of Buddhist activities and mission. In 749, the biggest brass image of the Buddha, called 'the Nara-Daya-Butsu' was installed in the main shrine of the city It is 53 feet high, and 666 pounds of gold, 16,827 pounds of tin, 1954 pounds of mercury and 9,86,180 pounds of brass were used in manufacturing the image[1] Thus, arts, architecture and culture were stimulated to an all-round development in Japan on account of the inspiration which came in the wake of Buddhism.

TIBET

Though Tibet is so close to India, the Himalayan ranges act as a barrier It took Buddhism several centuries before it could reach there. Indo-Tibetan cultural relations really began in the first half of the 7th century, when the Tibetan king, Srong-Sen-Gam-Po, sent a batch of wise men to India particularly to study Sanskrit and other languages of the country. The party lived in India for eighteen years, and, under monk scholars like Lipidutta and Sinhaghosha, they worked hard and gained a fair mastery over the language and literature of the Buddhist scriptures They translated important books like the *Karandakarvyuha Sutra* and *Avalokiteshwara Sutra*.

The king, Srong-Sen-Gam-Po, had two queens, one from Nepal and the other from China Both were devout Buddhists. On account of their influence, the king embraced Buddhism and his energies were devoted to the establishment of Buddhist temples and monasteries. He invited learned monks from foreign countries to propagate the Dhamma in Tibet, with Lhasa as its capital. Even today, he is looked upon in Tibet with great respect and he is depicted as one who turned the Wheel of Righteousness.

King Ti-Song-De-Sen, a devoted Buddhist monk of Tibet, sent a royal invitation to the great Buddhist saint and philosopher Santirakkhita, the then Principal of the famous Buddhist University of Nalanda. Unfortunately, soon after the arrival of Santirakkhita to Tibet, the country was subjected to several calamities, such as epidemics, floods, storm and famine. The people began to attribute all these to the arrival of the Indian Pandit, and the opposition was so great that the king had to send him to Nepal for a time. But the people did not forget the events. Santirakkhita advised the king to invite the great Indian mystic Padmasambhava, who, he thought, might be able to quell those calamities, with his spiritual and yogic powers Accordingly, Padmasambhava was brought to Tibet, in 747, and was given a rousing reception all over the country. Soon after his arrival, the doubts of the people subsided and a peaceful atmosphere prevailed. Padmasambhava was hailed as a redeemer He established a monastery at Sam-ye, about 30 miles from Lhasa, which was modelled after the plan and architecture of the famous university of Odantapuri, near Nalanda Several Tibetans, for the first time, were admitted to the order as full-fledged Buddhist monks.

After Padmasambhava left Tibet, Santirakkhita carried on his mission of propagation and of translating books from

Sanskrit to Tibetan. The chief associates and collaborators of his were Aryadeva, Buddhakirti, Kumarashri, Karnapati, Sumatisena and Kamalasila. Thus, under the liberal and devout royal patronage for ages, there was a regular exchange of monks and books between Tibet and Nalanda; so much so that they succeeded in preparing a most perfect Tibetan version of the entire Buddhist Tripitaka

In 1038, at the invitation of the king Cang-Sub-O, teacher Atisa, another great Indian Buddhist saint and scholar, reached Tibet and wiped off the various heresies that existed in the country as a formidable challenge to Buddhism. Atisa established a number of monasteries, ordained many able Tibetan scholars as monks, and wrote valuable books on Buddhism for the benefit of the people of the country

Atisa left behind him many able Tibetan disciples, of whom Dromtan was the chief and most successful organiser of the Buddhist mission in Tibet He founded a sect that became the most powerful force in the country, both in politics and in religion Uniquely enough, in Tibet, the head of the Buddhist church began to be at the same time the head of the State, a tradition that has been followed up to the present times

KHOTAN—CENTRAL ASIA

A few decades earlier, no one could have even imagined that under the long-stretching sandy desert round about Turkistan lay the glorious remains of highly prosperous Buddhist centres, of lofty monasteries, pagodas and temples, thousands of manuscripts, paintings and inscriptions Archaeological explorers have traced in these sandy hills the existence of ancient cities, forts, caves and every other thing which a civilised nation usually leaves behind.

The history of the establishment and decay of Khotan is still shrouded in mystery. From the accounts of the Chinese traveller, Yuan Chwang, as also through Tibetan sources, it is at least certain that the Khotan civilisation had a joint Sino-Indian origin Prince Kustan was an Indian prince, who lived in this part of the country. The language of the place bears philological semblances both to India and to China

The first missionary who brought Buddhism to Khotan was Arhat Vairochana from Kashmir. The king Vijayasambhava of Khotan received him with all honour He performed some feats of yogic miracles and completely won his admiration and devotion for Buddhism. This king was pehaps a contemporary of king Bhumimitra He built a monastery for Vairochana, called the Shrama Vihar, which became the strong centre of Buddhist activities in Khotan

The eighth king of the dynasty Vijayavira, is also known to have been a devout Buddhist He was the donor of two monasteries, Gantsir Chaitya and Gosring Vihar.

The eleventh king, Vijayajaya. married a Chinese princess, Zu-Shi, who had built a monastery after her name and offered it to the Order

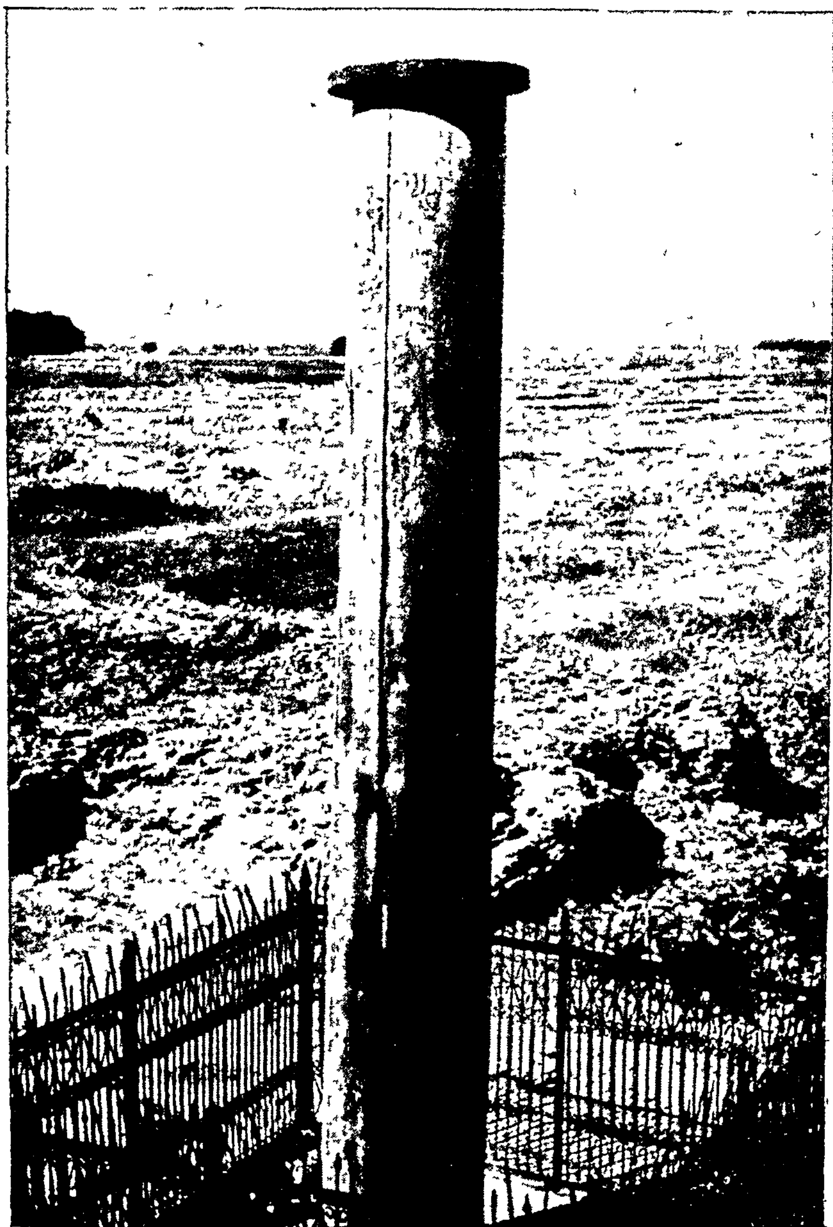
Yuan Chwang had himself once stayed in this monastery. He has given a vivid description of it in his travel accounts. He has mentioned that he had seen mulberry trees in the yards of the big monastery on which silk worms were reared

The eldest son of Vijayajaya was Dharmananda He became a monk and went to India for studying the Dhamma On his return to Khotan he became a great religious leader, the founder of the famous Mahasanghika sect

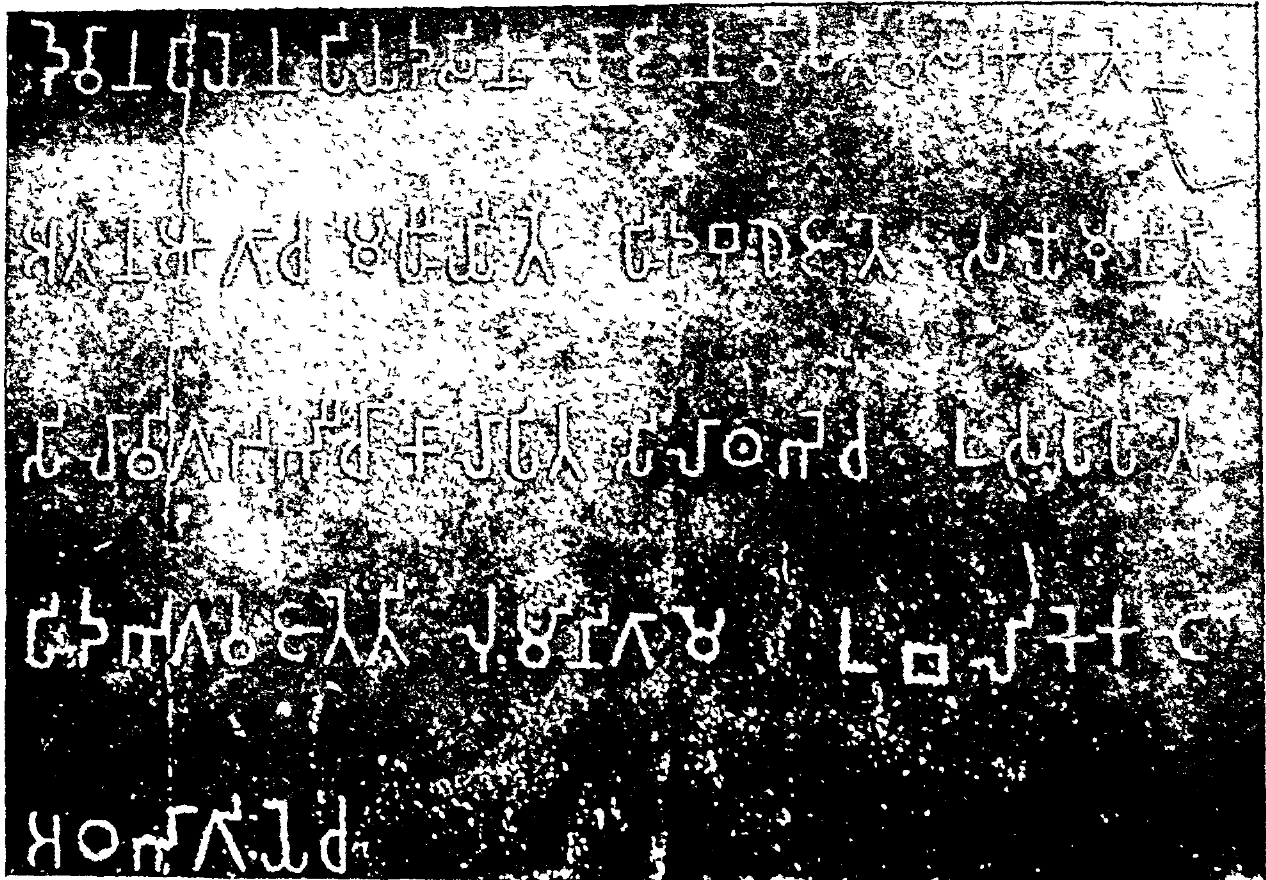
Another king of Khotan, Dan-Daras, it is recorded, invited a monk from India called Mantrasiddhi and founded some monasteries of the Sarvastivada school.

In 404, the Chinese traveller Fa-Hien reached Khotan from Hoocha and lived there for some time He gives a full description of the religions of Khotan, of the Buddhist temples, pagodas, monasteries and colossal images of the Buddha In Gomti Vihar alone, he says, there were three thousand monks living together in a community, under strict monastic discipline

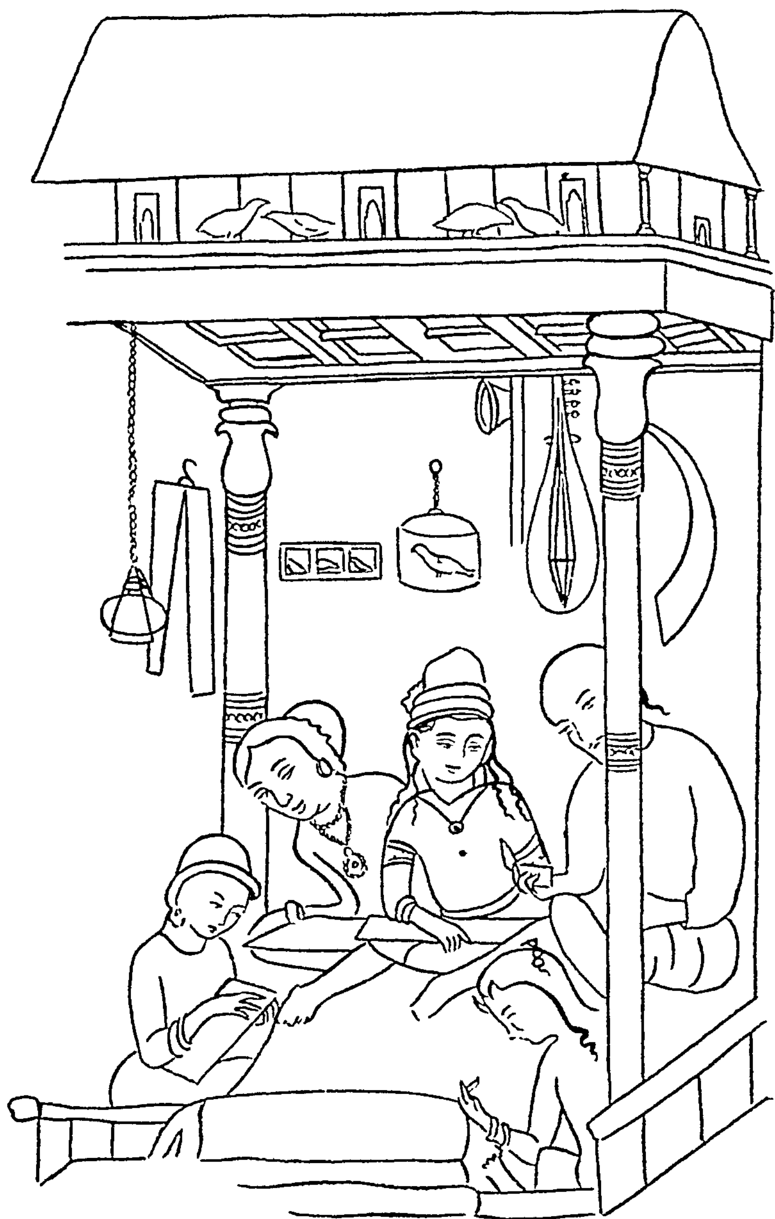
According to the Tibetan tradition, fifteen hundred years after the Buddha, a king of Khotan became terribly anti-Buddhistic, so much so that all the monks were compelled to leave Khotan and migrate to Tibet, Gandhar and other places wherever they could get shelter In 1000, the Turks, under Yusuf Kadar Khan, subjugated Khotan and established Muslim rule, driving out Buddhism from the country for ever



The Lumbini Pillar (244 B C) of Asoka



The Lumbini Pillar inscription of Asoka records that it was in the Lumbini Garden that Gautama Buddha was born.

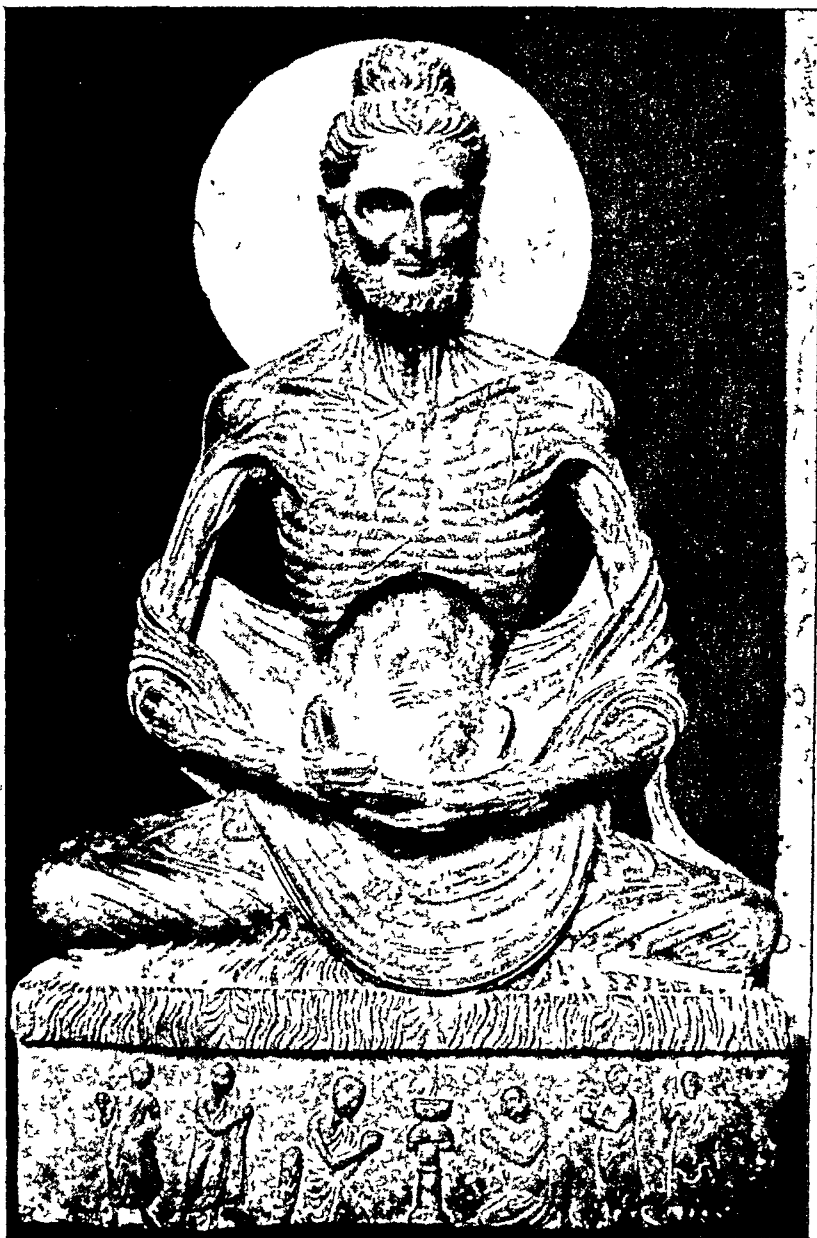


Gautama at School—It may be noted that there are two girls also—School in a Verandah—Brahmin teacher
(Ajanta Painting Cave XVI, 6th Century A D)





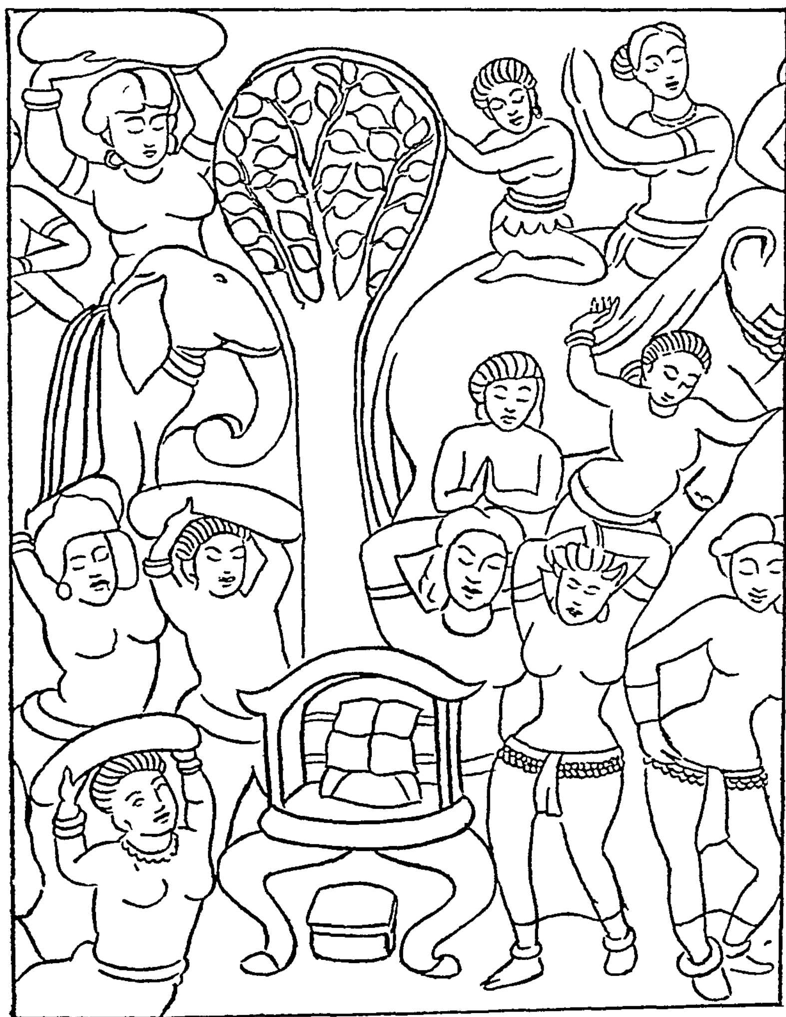
1. *Gautama practising writing* 2 *Learning music*
3 *Trying archery*
(Gandhara Sculptures, 2nd Century A.D)



The austerities of Buddha before going to Uruvela, Gandhara



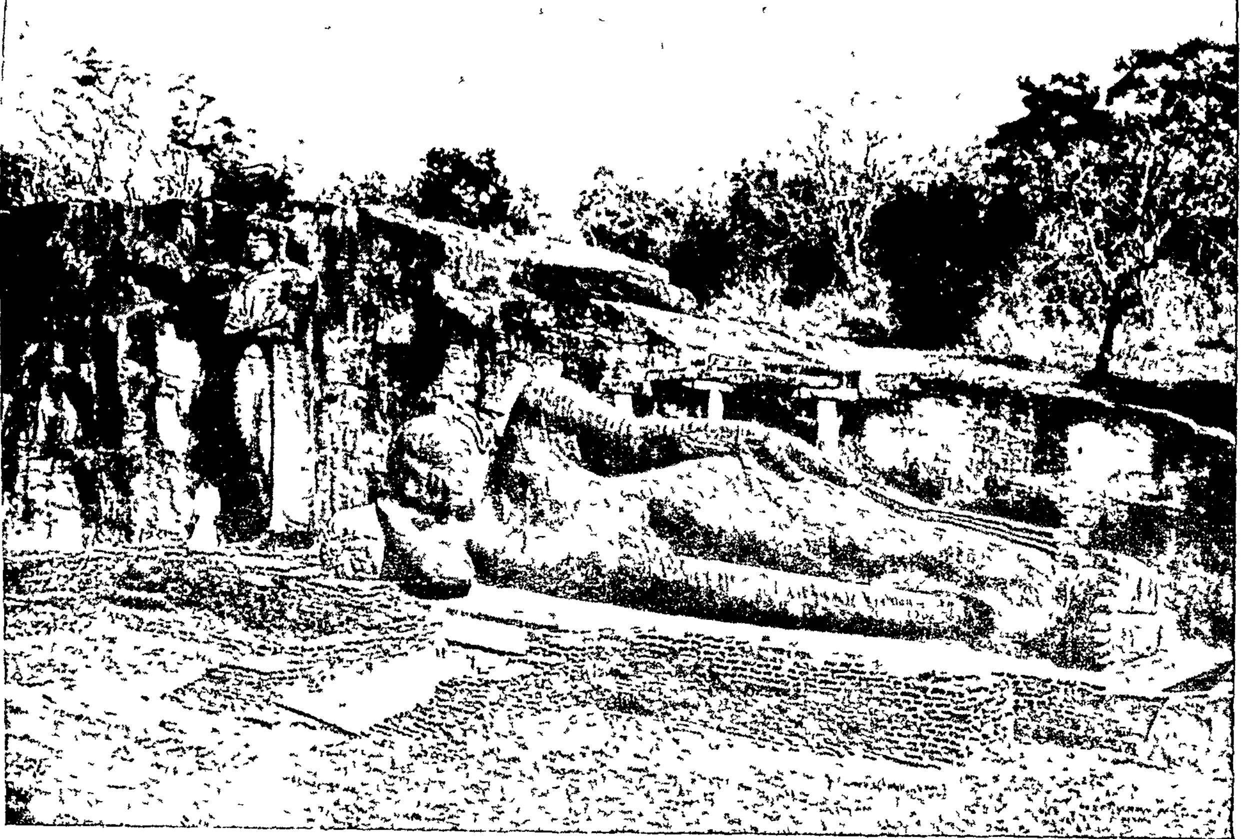
Buddha with Alar Kalam before Sambodhi
Ananda temple, Burma



Vain assault of Mara and his army of tempters on Buddha under the Bodhi Tree—He had already attained spiritual transcendence—The vacant seat is symbolic of 'nothing that could be attacked,' Amaravati (2nd Century A D)



*Buddha in Jnanamudra   The first sermon after Sambodhi
Sarnath*



Buddha's Mahaparinirvana—Reclining Buddha (Ananda in attendance) Gal Vihara, Ceylon

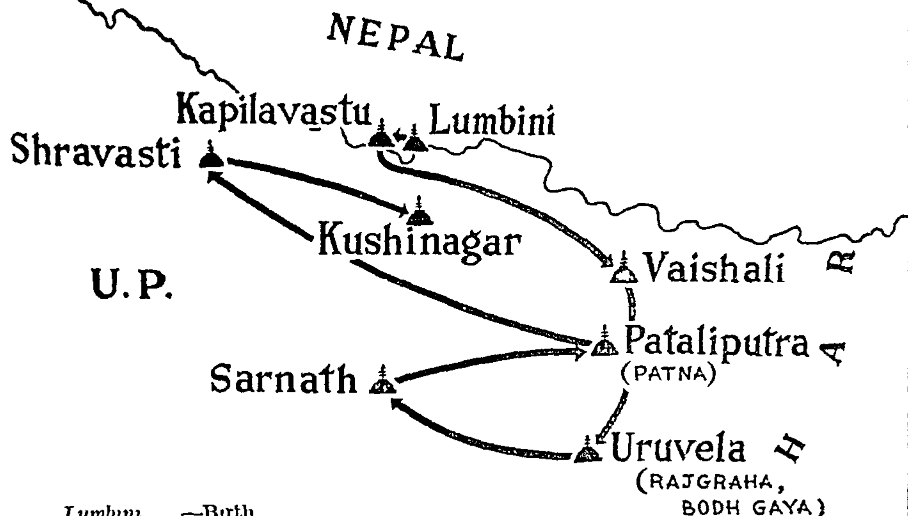


Colossal Buddha, Kamakura, Japan

PLACES HALLOWED BY

THE FEET OF

BUDDHA



Lumbini —Birth

Kapilavastu—Childhood, boyhood, education, married life

Vaishali —In search of Truth, meeting wise men of the day, later, frequent visits after Sambodhi

Sarnath —Austerities, again later visit after Sambodhi, then Dharmachakra Pravartana

Uruvela (Rajgriha and Bodh Gaya) —Contemplative life Sambodhi, stay at Gridhrakuta in Rajgriha

Pataliputra —Visits in later life

Shravasti —Frequent visits and stay at Jathavana

Kushinagar —Mahaparinirvana

GLOSSARY

Note —In most cases an attempt has been made to explain in the text itself words which are unfamiliar to English readers The following glossary may however be helpful

ARHAT, ARHAT-HOOD	The Perfect Being, The highest perfection a man can attain
ASHRAMS	The four stages in a Hindu s life Brahmacharya, Garhastya, Vanaprastha and Sannyas
BHIKKU, BHIKSHU	Buddhist Monk
BODHISATTVA OR BODHISATTA	Buddha before attainment of Buddha-hood or in his earlier births one who is to attain Buddha-hood in the next life
BODHI-TREE	The tree (Fig tree) under which Buddha sat meditating and attained enlightenment
BRAHMACHARYA	Observance of continence while following the discipline of a seeker of Brahma or Truth
BRAHMA-SUTRAS	Philosophical aphorisms only next in importance to the Upanishads
BUDDHA	One who has attained Perfect Knowledge,—the Enlightened One
CHAITYA	A shrine usually consisting of a sacred tree and an open structure prior to the institution of temples
DHAMMA	Religion, Dharma
DUKHA	Sorrow, misery, pain
EMPATHY	Identification by feeling as one emotional unity
GURU	The Spiritual teacher, The Master
JATAKA STORIES	In Buddhism, stories pertaining to Buddha's former births, parables and stories

MAHA-PARINIRVANA	The great departure, the passing away of Buddha
MANGALA	Auspicious
MARA	The God of Desire, Temptation personified
MRIGA-VANA	Deer Park (Near Sarnath)
NIBBANA	Nirvana, the final and highest spiritual attainment according to Buddhism
NIRGRANTHA	Literally without a knot, a sect of Shramanas who preceded the Jain and Buddhist monks
PARINIRVANA	Departure, passing away
PAVARANA	Buddhist discourse
PRATIMOKSHA	Precepts (Buddhist)
PREYA	That which is pleasing to the senses
ROSE-APPLE	Amalaki, familiarly known as Amla, Awala
SADHAKA	A spiritual aspirant
SADHANA	Spiritual discipline
SADHU	A saint
SAMBODHI	Full or perfect knowledge, Enlightenment
SAMSAR	The cycle of birth and death, the creation
SAMYA	Equipoise
SAMYAK	Right, proper, correct
SANGHA	Association Buddhist brotherhood
SANNYAS	Complete renunciation, The fourth and last stage in a Hindu's life
SHOONYA	Nothingness, complete vacuum, zero
SHRAMANA	One who has renounced the world in search of Truth, an ascetic
SHREYA	That which is pleasing to the soul, to the spirit

SIDDHA	Perfect one, one who has attained the highest spiritual status
STUPA	Any pagoda-like structure usually symbolising a structure built on the ashes or relics of Buddha
SYNERGY	Samskar, impression left on the consciousness by any action, thought or feeling which in its own turn becomes the cause of further action, thought or feeling
TAPAS	Austerity, concentrated discipline for attaining perfection
TATHAGATA	Buddha, one who has attained the highest
TRINNA, TRISHNA	Thirst, Craving, Desire
TRIPITAKA	The basic Buddhist Pali Canons, three in number
UPASAMPADA	The ceremony of ordaining a monk, attainment
UPOSATHA, UPASATTA	Fortnightly meeting of Buddhist monks
VARNAS	The four divisions Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra in Hindu society
VEDANA	Sensation, perception by any of the senses without any emotional reaction of liking or not liking or disliking
VIHAR	Monastery for Buddhist monks
VRATYA	One who does not perform or observe Vedic rites
YANA	Vehicle, means of spiritual emancipation

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5 *The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*
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